

First aid

If concerned about your dog's health, you should contact a suitably qualified veterinary professional for advice. However, in an emergency it is useful to be aware of the following.

Bloat & gastric torsion

Gastric Torsion is caused by a dysfunction of the stomach where food becomes trapped because there is an obstruction of outflow. This results in excess gas build up (bloat) which may cause twisting of the stomach.

Symptoms are varied, but in general the dog will look uncomfortable and distressed to extremely distressed. There may be abdominal distension, hyper salivation, breathing difficulties, retching, and weakness may also be seen.

This condition is life threatening, therefore you should take your dog to the vets immediately if the above symptoms are seen.

To help prevent Bloat and Gastric Torsion, do not exercise your dog 1 hour before and 2 hours after feeding and remove old damp food and replace with fresh food for next meal.

Acute diarrhoea/vomiting

If your dog has acute diarrhoea or vomiting:

For young puppies less than 6 months, keep well hydrated by offering plenty of fresh water, and contact your vet for advice.

For puppies or dogs over 6 months, if severe, starve them for 12-24 hours then give them a light diet e.g. white fish, chicken, rice, or scrambled eggs until they return to normal health. Keep well hydrated by offering plenty of fresh water, and monitor your dog's behaviour.

Contact your vet if you have any concerns or see no improvement.

Make sure your dog is unable to get at any food other than their diet. Wrap cooked bones up and put in outside bins. Make sure your dog cannot get in to any bins.

Burns & scalds

Treat your dog as you would a small child in the kitchen area. Make sure wires are safe, no pan handles sticking out, and hot drinks are out of the dog's reach. Become 'wagging tail' aware.

- Cool the burn using copious amounts of cold water (either running water from a tap or immerse the body part in a clean bowl of cold water for at least 20 minutes).
- If you cannot get to cold water, use an ice pack to cool the wound.
- If there is any hair or clothing sticking to the wound, do not remove it and call your vet.

Dog bites / scratches

Read your dog's body language as well as other dogs' signals. Avoid knowingly taking your dog anywhere where confrontation may happen for the safety of yourself as well as your dog.

How to treat a cut/graze:

- Look to see if there are any other injuries in the area and treat accordingly e.g. Bruising.
- It may be necessary to carefully cut away any hair around the wound using scissors.
- Wash the area in cool salty water.
- Dry the area.
- Apply an antiseptic.
- Keep a check on the wound, looking out for signs of infection such as redness, inflammation, pus, and pain.
- Continue to treat as above. If you have any concerns consult your vet.
- Only cover the wound if you feel it will prevent any further damage to the area.

In the event of severe haemorrhage, apply pressure to prevent further bleeding and take your dog to the vets immediately.

Ears, eyes & feet

Avoid running your dog in long grass to prevent grass seeds getting in ears. If your dog has an eye injury, contact your vet. Never force the eyelid open if closed and if there is something sticking out, do not pull it out. Prevent your dog from scratching the area. Keep checking where you are going - avoid freshly tarmacked paths, places with broken glass, spilled oil etc.

Heat stroke

Heat stroke is caused by extreme heat exposure. Sitting in a car, excessive exercise, or lying in a sunny spot on a warm day can cause heat stroke. If you suspect your dog may have heat stroke, contact your vet for immediate advice and cool the dog down by offering a cool drink of water and by doing one of the following:

- Place them in a cold bath.
- Shower them in water from a hose.
- Tip buckets of cool water over them gently .
- Soak towels in water and place these over the dog, replacing for new cool ones frequently.

Never leave your dog in a car on a hot day, for even a minute, without full ventilation (e.g. boot wide open), reflective sun screens/sheets, plenty of water and leaving the car in a shady place.

Choking

Do not throw sticks for your dog; they can become lodged in the throat or mouth.

- Give the dog a chance to naturally clear their own throat, then if required:
- Open the mouth carefully with one hand pressing the dog's lips over the teeth if possible.
- Open the bottom jaw with the other hand.
- Remove the object with a wooden spoon handle or other similar type of implement; do not let the object fall back into the throat.
- If you cannot see an object and suspect it is further back in the throat, you should take the dog to a vet immediately.
- It may be necessary to clear the airway by raising the hind legs and applying pressure between the stomach and ribs.

Allergies

Be aware of the products you use in the home. Flea and worm treatments are very important in preventing allergies. Signs of allergic-type responses include: swelling, itching, and redness of the skin at the contact site; depression, occasional vomiting and diarrhoea (if allergen has been ingested). Severe reactions result in shock and may lead to collapse.

Mild/moderate allergic reactions:

- Keep the animal as calm as possible.
- If you know what has caused the reaction, remove it from the dog.
- Remove the collar as it may restrict the throat area.
- If possible apply a cold compress to the affected area to reduce inflammation and pain.
- Call a vet if the reaction does not calm after 24hrs or if the dogs' breathing becomes laboured.

Severe allergic reactions:

as above and, especially if the airway may be affected,

- Call your vet immediately, this is life threatening.
- Monitor for shock and treat accordingly.

Shock

Shock is the body's reaction to trauma (wounds, burns and broken bones), pain, dehydration, allergic reaction or infection to the body. Shock is potentially life threatening.

Signs: shaking, shivering, rapid weak pulse, rapid shallow breathing, pale mucous membranes and coldness.

- Call your vet immediately.
- Keep your dog calm.
- Check capillary re-fill time.
- Maintain a normal body temperature i.e. if cold: cover with a blanket, if hot: keep them cool.
- Lay the dog down and elevate the back legs if possible to concentrate the blood to the head and try and make them as comfortable as possible by laying them on a blanket.
- If the cause is obvious e.g. severe bleeding, you should treat this as soon as possible to minimise shock.