



FEATURE

EMERGENCY CHECKLIST FOR PET EVACUATION

Are you pre-pawed for evacuation?

Did you know that one of the main reasons people refuse to leave their homes when being evacuated, due to storms, floods or fires, is because they don't know what to do with their pets? Sadly, this decision has cost some people their lives.

Just as we need to prepare our family and property in times of emergencies and natural disasters, we also need to prepare our animals. After human safety, the welfare of your animals should be your most important consideration in the event of a natural disaster.

As owners or carers of animals, you have a duty of care to provide appropriate food, water, shelter and treatment for injury or disease for your animals. Having a duty of care for an animal that you are in charge of means you are legally obliged to care for it by providing for its needs in a reasonable way. Remember that animals can sense danger and can easily become stressed, so reassurance from you and early action is imperative to relocate to a safer location.

Pet and Animal Plan

When developing your pet emergency plan it is important to consider the following:

- Do your research early and make a plan ahead of time.
- Share the plan with family, friends and neighbours, so they know what to do and what you will be doing during an emergency.
- Animals will require a constant source of water and food, shade and a safe place to shelter.
- If you need to move your pets to a safer place, think about where and how you will relocate them. Before you leave your property, check that your chosen place to relocate is accessible.
- Animals are not allowed in relocation centres, except Guide Dogs. Consult your local Council, Department of Primary Industries or the RSPCA for information on animal refuges in your area.
- Evacuation Centres are required to cater for domestic animals. The animals are generally accommodated within the grounds of the centre or in a facility adjacent to it. Having a crate to house your animal during evacuation is recommended as part of your emergency kit. Guide Dogs are the only animals that are allowed inside the evacuation centre, where people are being accommodated.

For more information on accommodating animals during emergencies please consult your local Council, Department of Primary Industries or the RSPCA.

- Listen to the ABC and local radio stations for updates on the conditions in your area and follow any evacuation advice provided from agencies, such as the NSW State Emergency Service, NSW Rural Fire Service and other emergency services.
- Remember to act safe and not risk human life.
- Plan early and do not leave at the last minute, as this is the most dangerous option for you and your animals.

Prepare checklist

Prepare a pet emergency kit (see the NSW State Emergency Service Dog Grab Kit on page 14).

Check with your local council regarding animal welfare plans during emergencies

- Update your animals' microchip details
- Ensure vaccinations are all up to date
- Ensure your pets' council registrations are current
- Ensure your pets have adequate identification
- Have current photos of your domestic animals to assist in easily identifying you as the legal owner
- Include the following phone numbers in your emergency plan: Your veterinarian, local animal welfare agency (for example the RSPCA).

The NSW State Emergency Service (NSW SES) wants pet owners to be pre-pawed for emergencies, especially in situations where they may need to evacuate their home, due to flooding, storm damage, or even bushfires.

In most cases, people go to stay with relatives or friends, but if you have to go to an evacuation centre, having your pets needs organised beforehand can reduce the stress and ensure you can evacuate quickly.

Having a pet emergency kit prepares your pets for relocation at short notice.

One of the most useful items to have is a secure pet crate, where your dog can be housed. Preferably this should be large enough for the dog to be able to turn around. The collapsed metal or soft crates that pack flat are ideal.



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Pet **EMERGENCY FIRST AID**

Extract from *The Dog Owner's Manual*
by Dr Karen Hedberg BVSc

A basic definition of an emergency is any situation which could cause death or dire consequences if immediate action is not taken. First aid may save the animal's life or prevent further deterioration before professional veterinary attention can be obtained, particularly in cases of trauma or poisoning. In some cases, failure to treat the animal may result in its death, or permanent disability to an organ or its normal function, e.g. injuries to the eye.

1. Handling of Injured Animals

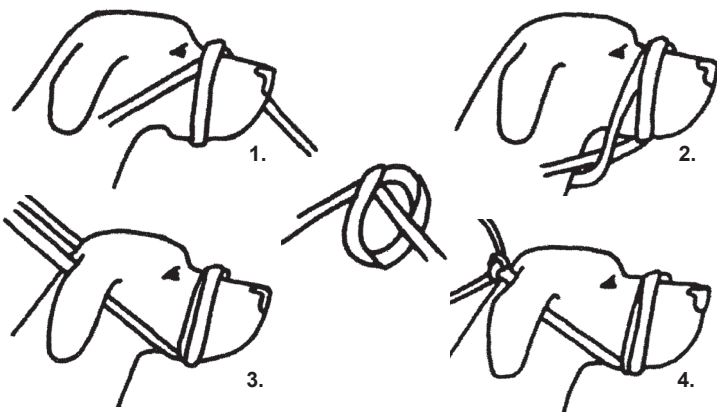
The main aims of assistance to injured animals, are to ensure that the animal is handled in a way to minimise further damage, that the people assisting are not bitten or damaged and that effective, appropriate treatment is instigated as soon as possible. When people go to the assistance of injured animals, they often fail to take a cautious approach. Injured animals are often in shock, usually in considerable pain and can lash out at any object, (for example, hands) that approach their line of vision, in an attempt to defend themselves from further injury. Even if the injured animal is a beloved family pet, if injured, it can lash out instinctively. In the interests of safety, caution should be used, all the more so with major injuries, such as broken legs, fractured pelvis, severe bruising etc.

Restraining and moving an injured animal

If you have a thick towel or blanket nearby, use that to cover the animal's head if it is trying to bite, or to form a thick loop with it to place around the animal's neck so it cannot bend its neck sufficiently to be able to bite you. Larger dogs should preferably be muzzled before being moved.

Applying a Muzzle to Dogs

Use a gauze bandage, stocking or length of thin rope, whichever is available at the time. Apply firmly but not excessively tight. Loop the tie over the muzzle, tighten firmly, swing the ends down under the muzzle, crossing over before pulling the ends up behind the back of the head, and firmly tie in a bow or knot that can be easily released. Not all dogs require muzzling, but be very careful when lifting an unmuzzled dog. **DO NOT** have the dog's mouth near your face while lifting or carrying it.



Moving an injured animal

Move an injured animal gently by lifting by the scruff, or around the chest, while supporting the hindquarters. If the neck is injured lift the animal under the chest, supporting the head at the same time, by gently holding the head.

Place the animal on a flat surface with the head extended. Keep the injured animal warm by covering it with a blanket, often covering the eyes as well. This keeps the animal calmer, as it is not as exposed to external stimuli, such as light or sound. Holding and rocking a badly injured animal, particularly one with broken limbs, is **NOT** a good idea.

Assessing the Damage

Once the animal is safely immobilised so that it can be handled without further damage to either itself or its would be rescuer, check the animal over quickly to assess it's condition and if needed, apply some basic first aid.

2. Initial aims (once the animal is safely restrained) are to:-

(a) Establish a patent airway, i.e. make sure the animal can breathe easily. This usually involves gently clearing the nose of blood from the nostrils and keeping the head slightly extended so as not to cut off the flow of air into the lungs.

(b) Check for shock. Shock is the defensive reaction by the body to cope with severe trauma.

Signs of major shock are:-

(i) Pale mucous membranes of the gums and eyes - very pale to white gums and tongue generally indicates internal bleeding. The paler the gums, the quicker the animal needs to be treated. To check the state of the circulatory system to see how it is coping, press firmly on the gums, release and see how quickly the colour returns. Very slow or minimal return indicates more severe shock.

(ii) Rapid shallow breathing - this combined with pale/white mucous membranes can indicate internal bleeding, often of the lungs. Sit the animal up on its chest, with the head extended, so as to get maximum lung room. If needed, put a towel or blanket under the head to support it in the extended position.

(iii) Lower body temperature, particularly of the extremities - cold feet, muzzle and ears. Wrap the animal in a blanket and keep warm. Ideally a space blanket as this retains the heat, alternatively a woollen blanket for the same reasons. If doing regular recovery work, keep a supply of either in the car.

***Haemorrhage from the nose, mouth, ears and/or anus is usually indicative of major internal bleeding/damage and the outcome is often poor.**



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(c) Apply pressure bandages to heavily bleeding areas. Apply a pressure bandage to any heavily bleeding site, if at all possible. Feet and leg injuries can bleed quite profusely. A firm (not too tight) bandage of several layers thickness will usually be quite effective. Use several layers of bandage with a tighter layer of bandage on the outside.

****If there are no bandages on hand at the time, a tee shirt with some electrical tape over the top is quite effective.***

Apply above (closer to the body) and on top of any heavily bleeding area. Very tight bandages are to be avoided unless the bleeding cannot be controlled in any other way. For wounds that persist in bleeding, despite a firm bandage, apply a further tighter layer on the area, keep the affected limb elevated in regard to the rest of the body, and seek professional attention as soon as possible.

****Minor injuries and scrapes should be left alone, as they are not life threatening.***

(d) Fractured limbs - where there are no exposed bones or significant bleeding present, leave the affected limb alone. Obtain veterinary assistance as soon as possible. This applies particularly to animals, who despite restraint, are aggressive towards any assistance.

If you do need to support and/or cover a limb, a quick and easy support splint can be made out of any available strong cardboard or thick layers of newspaper rolled up. Then apply a bandage gently around the splint, with more bandage wrapped above and below the fracture, rather than over the actual fracture site itself.

**** Fractured bones are better left alone, unless you know what you are doing and the animal is fairly placid. This would apply to very few people and even fewer animals!***

(e) Cover or seal any deep wounds to the chest. These wounds are not common, but when they occur, they can be life threatening. Again a firm (not too tight!) bandage of several layers, with preferably a thick pad over the largest wounds will assist until one can reach the nearest vet.

(f) Get the injured animal to a veterinarian as soon as possible. Ring your veterinarian if you can, and tell him/her the colour of the gums, the rate of respiration (rapid/slow/shallow etc), whether the animal can stand on all legs, and if it is bleeding. If the animal is severely injured, the vet may be able to come out, but it is usually far quicker for you to get there, than for the vet to find you, especially late at night. Remember, all the necessary equipment is generally on hand at the veterinary hospital.

If there is no way of getting to a vet for any appreciable length of time, apply basic first aid, keep the animal warm and leave it somewhere quiet and dark. A small amount of brandy on the gums can help to stimulate the heart and reduce the shock. Leave some water with a little glucose added in a bowl next to the animal. This applies equally to all species.

Emergency First Aid Kit

This is particularly useful if frequently treating injured animals or if regularly travelling on long distances with animals, especially with travel-induced stress e.g. diarrhoea or dehydration, which can occur out in the wilds, a long way from any known veterinarian. The contents are on the whole, available from veterinarians or your local chemist. The value of having a first aid kit has to be experienced by the lack of one, when you are faced with an 'emergency' and you have nothing on hand.

Emergency First Aid Kit items:

- Bandage - 1 roll of Elastoplast, 1 roll of conforming gauze (soft, stretchy non-stick bandage)
- Dressings - gauze swabs, metho swabs (3-4), iodine swabs (3-4).
- Cleansers - cotton wool, wound cleanser - iodine/betadine.
- Instruments - scissors and tweezers, 3cc syringe
- Electrolyte sachet or liquid mix and a supply of water.
- Woollen blanket or space blanket (very light foil type wrap).
- Scissors
- Thermometer °C. (Normal Range (dogs/cats) 37.5-38.9°C, Average 38.0-38.4°C. Above 39.0°C is elevated, Below 37.0°C - low).

Useful backup for travelling

- Eyes - liquid tears.
- Stomach - diarrhoea mixture, charcoal tabs, Stemetil (vomiting)
- Creams - anhydrous wool fat (for sore feet), Stingose®, fly repellent.
- Tablets - vitamin K, laxatives, Sulphonamide tabs (vet only), calcium.
- Antibiotic spray or powder.

Common-sense advice

In addition to the items listed for your emergency first aid kit, pets who take medications regularly should have a couple of days supply of all current medications. Consult your veterinarian to help you customise a first aid kit to meet your pet's additional medical needs. Check the supplies in your pet's first-aid kit occasionally and replace any items that have expired.

For your family's safety, keep all medical supplies and medications out of the reach of children and pets.

Remember, being prepared in the face of an emergency is calming and helps ensure the health and safety of your pets.

