

## First Aid for Dogs

By Jerry Carey, DVM

This handout concentrates on what you can do to help your dog in an emergency situation. In all emergencies the most important thing is to remain calm and think rationally. Your common sense will often give you the answer of what to do. In most cases you will want to consult a veterinarian as soon as possible and the final step for each of the following situations is transport to a veterinarian for further care.

### Approaching a Sick or Injured Animal

If a dog is conscious, *be careful*. Assume it might bite and become aggressive from fear or pain. Speak in soft and soothing tone. Watch for growling, hair on back standing up, snarling and teeth exposure. Approach the dog toward its head allowing it to see you all the time. Extend your arms in a friendly manner as you approach and be ready to stop at the first sign of aggression. **Don't risk injury to yourself!**

### Handling – Do all of following in the order presented

- **Leash** – The best first step to handle any dog is usually to put a leash on it. You should use something with which you can make a large loose loop to slip over the dogs head. This could be a conventional leash with the snap end run through the loop handle, a nylon leash with ring in end, a rope or long piece of cloth ( like a piece torn from an old sheet – this also will be useful for other things discussed latter).
- **Muzzle** –Use a muzzle if there is any doubt. Your friendly dog who would “never bite” may bite from fear or pain. I recommend you purchase a fitted nylon muzzle from a pet supply store in case you ever need it.



If you do not have a nylon muzzle, you can also use roll gauze, rope or cloth to construct a muzzle. Have a length of approximately 3 feet, create a large loop, slip the loop around the nose and tighten with single throw, cross it under the neck, extend ends up neck, around ears and tie a double throw knot very securely (obviously you don't want it too tight but the natural tendency is not to tie tight enough – this will not choke the dog).



---

### Blue Springs Animal Hospital & Pet Resort

Hospital Hours 7-7 Mon – Fri; 8-3:30 Sat

Dr. Jerry Carey Dr. Joe Rodier Dr. Nikki Stark Dr. Gina Bradley  
Dr. Susan Steiner Dr. Stuart Ryder Dr. Elise Lesko Dr. Rachel Smith  
1201 W. 40 Highway, Blue Springs, MO 64015  
(816) 229-1544

[www.bluespringsanimalhospital.com](http://www.bluespringsanimalhospital.com)

- **Restraint** – If there is only one person, tie the leash to something and work on affected area. If there is an extra person there are two methods:



- **Headlock** – Place one arm around the animal’s neck, face you head toward the dog’s tail and lock forearm against head. Place other arm around the animal’s belly.

- **Lying on side** – Stand over dog, reach over it and grasp the front and hind legs closest to your body, gently pull the legs toward you laying the dog on its side and hold the legs out straight applying pressure with your arms to keep the dog from getting up.



- **Transporting**

- **Small dog** – Hold securely against your body or put in carrier.
- **Large dog** – Place one arm around the neck and the second under the abdomen for hind leg injury or behind the back legs if abdominal injury. Using a blanket is another good way to transport, especially with two people, each holding on to two corners. If you suspect a broken back, a board like a piece of plywood covered with a blanket is the best way to transport.

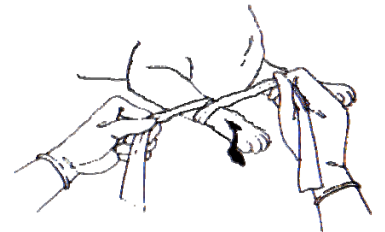


### Bleeding

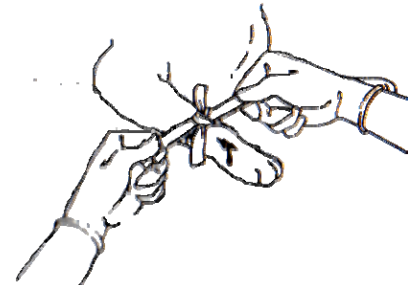
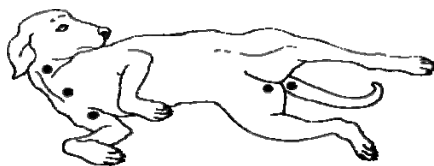
Apply pressure directly to affected area with gauze or cloth against the wound. You may wrap cloth over the wound if it is on the limb or tail. If an ear flap is bleeding, fold it up over the head and secure to head by wrapping around the neck.



If a limb or tail is spurting blood, apply a tourniquet closer to the body. It will need to be secure and tight to stop the bleeding. One way to accomplish this is to wrap with cloth one time, put a stick over the wrap, wrap twice again, and twist the stick to apply pressure required to stop bleeding. ***A tourniquet should be a last resort since it could cause permanent damage.*** Release the tourniquet after 3 minutes for a few seconds and reapply if needed. Increase interval between releases one minute at a time up to 10 minutes maximum.



Another way of slowing bleeding is to apply pressure at pressure points. They are inside legs near body, under tail and in the groove on the either side of trachea in neck.




---

### Blue Springs Animal Hospital & Pet Resort

Hospital Hours 7-7 Mon – Fri; 8-3:30 Sat

Dr. Jerry Carey Dr. Joe Rodier Dr. Nikki Stark Dr. Gina Bradley  
 Dr. Susan Steiner Dr. Stuart Ryder Dr. Elise Lesko Dr. Rachel Smith  
 1201 W. 40 Highway, Blue Springs, MO 64015  
 (816) 229-1544

[www.bluespringsanimalhospital.com](http://www.bluespringsanimalhospital.com)

## Limb Fractures

An obvious limb fracture should usually be splinted before transport (leg bent or moving between joints). Wrapping a long piece of cloth around the limb can provide a lot of support. Two rolls of newspaper with tape wrapped around makes a good splint. If you use a rigid material it is best to first wrap leg, apply rigid piece and wrap more around it. Use tape for the final layer.



## Wounds, Lacerations and Abrasions

If you are not going to take your dog to the veterinarian immediately, good wound care always begins with a thorough cleaning. Clip the hair as needed around the area and wash with soap and water. Liquid soap is best. Bandaging is usually needed and can be the only step if you are immediately going to the veterinarian. Avoid too much pressure when applying a bandage to a limb. You can use strips of cloth or gauze and tape.

## Shock

Shock is a condition where blood flow is diverted to internal organs, usually after severe trauma or blood loss. The dog will act dazed and the gums are usually pale. Elevate the hind end and wrap in blanket to keep warm.

## Heat Stroke

Never leave a dog in a car in hot weather without the windows cracked and then only for a very short time. Short nosed breeds and long coated northern breeds are more likely to have problems. If the rectal temperature is over 105, spray with cool water for 2 minutes and retake temperature. Repeat until temperature gets down to 104. Covering with a towel or blanket before spraying can speed up cool down. If you don't have a thermometer, the best place to feel if the dog is overheated is to put your finger inside the cheek pouch beside the teeth. The cool down should continue, in this case, until the gums are slightly warm to touch.



## Poisoning

Poisoning can happen in many ways and a complete discussion is beyond the scope of this handout. If you suspect poisoning and have the container, take it with you to the veterinarian. Antifreeze is the most common poison and use of antifreeze with propylene glycol in place of ethylene glycol is best. If you know or suspect a specific poison, call the Animal Poison Control Center at 1-800-548-2423 or 1-900-680-0000. There will be a fee charged for consultation with the Animal Poison Control Center.

## Contact information: Your Veterinarian's Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency clinics *if your veterinarian is closed*:

- \* Lee's Summit near Woods Chapel and 291 – 554-4990
- \* OP,KS at 110<sup>th</sup> and Quivera – 913-642-9563
- \* Mission, KS – 913-722-5566
- \* North KC at 81<sup>st</sup> and N Oak – 455-5430

First aid information and disaster preparedness for pets from American Red Cross – Go to [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org)

- o Disaster Preparedness: [www.redcross.org/services/disaster services/be prepared/animal safety](http://www.redcross.org/services/disaster%20services/be%20prepared/animal%20safety)
- o Pet First Aid: [www.redcross.org/services/hss/courses/pets](http://www.redcross.org/services/hss/courses/pets)
- o Pet First Aid Book, revised in 2005 for \$12.95: [www.redcrossstore.org](http://www.redcrossstore.org); search by keyword "Pet"
- o E-Mail at [info@redcross.org](mailto:info@redcross.org) or phone 816-931-8400.

---

## Blue Springs Animal Hospital & Pet Resort

Hospital Hours 7-7 Mon – Fri; 8-3:30 Sat

Dr. Jerry Carey Dr. Joe Rodier Dr. Nikki Stark Dr. Gina Bradley  
Dr. Susan Steiner Dr. Stuart Ryder Dr. Elise Lesko Dr. Rachel Smith  
1201 W. 40 Highway, Blue Springs, MO 64015  
(816) 229-1544

[www.bluespringsanimalhospital.com](http://www.bluespringsanimalhospital.com)