

Pet First Aid & Safety Resources for PSI Members



A publication by



PSI
Pet Sitters
INTERNATIONAL

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A Message from Pet Sitters International

We know that as a professional pet-sitting or dog-walking business owner, you make the health and safety of pets in your care top priorities.

April is Pet First Aid Awareness Month, and Pet Sitters International (PSI) encourages you to take this month to freshen up your pet first aid skills and make sure your team members (if applicable) do as well.

Consider adding these items to your to-do list this month:

1. If you or your staff haven't been trained in pet first aid (within the past two years), sign up for a class this month! You may be able to find in-person workshops offered locally, or PSI offers this [affordable online option](#).
2. Set aside time to check your pet first aid kit. Make sure your kits include everything you need and that your supplies are up to date.
3. Share pet first aid, health and safety tips with your clients, and be sure to highlight any pet first aid trainings you or your team have completed. Share this information in your e-newsletter or in your social-media posts this month.
4. Check out the articles and tips PSI has provided in this member e-book!

We've compiled the Pet First Aid & Safety articles written by Denise Fleck for *Pet Sitter's World* magazine last year. Make time to review these articles and feel free to share this resource with your team. Remember, you can also log in to the [Members Area of petsit.com](#) for additional resources and tips.



About Pet Sitters International

Founded in 1994 by Patti J. Moran, author of *Pet Sitting for Profit*, Pet Sitters International (PSI) is the world's largest educational association for professional pet sitters, with member pet-sitting businesses in the United States, Canada and more than 15 other countries.

PSI members have access to the widest array of business services and educational resources available in the professional pet-sitting industry. PSI's Pet Sitter Locator is the largest online directory of professional pet sitters, and pet owners can visit petsit.com/locate to find local professional pet sitters.



Denise Fleck is the Pet Safety Crusader™, having taught 31,000 humans animal life-saving skills. Her mission is to help YOU make a difference in the life of an animal through her pet first-aid, senior pet care and disaster preparedness classes. Denise has appeared on television, radio and in magazines, and has authored more than a dozen books. She is the proud recipient of multiple awards from both the Cat and the Dog Writers Associations, including the *PSI Professional Pet Care Award*. Learn more at www.PetSafetyCrusader.com.

DISCLAIMER: This resource is intended to share helpful insight and expertise and provides general information, tips and discussion for prospective and current professional pet-care providers. It is not intended to provide or replace medical, veterinary or other professional advice. You should not act on any of the information presented without consulting with a veterinary professional who understands the specific needs of the pets in your care.



Looking at Life from your Four-legged Clients' Perspective to Identify & Remove Potential Dangers

By Denise Fleck, The Pet Safety Crusader™

As holiday decorations get packed away until next season, remind your two-legged clients of the importance of looking at life from the perspective of their four-legged family members.

When you're in their homes, literally get down on all fours—on your hands and knees—in both the house and yard, to understand what life looks like at 7" to 22" off the floor and how it differs from a human's 62" to 72" point of view. You might want to give them a heads-up that you're going to do this if they have a home monitoring system!

If cats are among the pets you provide love and comfort to, hop up on a step stool to see what is accessible on shelves and even the top of the refrigerator! Anything within paws' or claws' reach is a potential danger to pets, and this can include items tucked behind cabinet doors. Many a pet parent has installed child-proof locks to keep dogs and cats safe.

Pets possess an acute sense of smell, so even when items are out of sight, they are never out of reach if the smell is inviting. A cat's sense of smell is even more highly attuned than a dog's, as felines have the ability to distinguish between very similar scents. Therefore, the right aroma can make cats curious too!

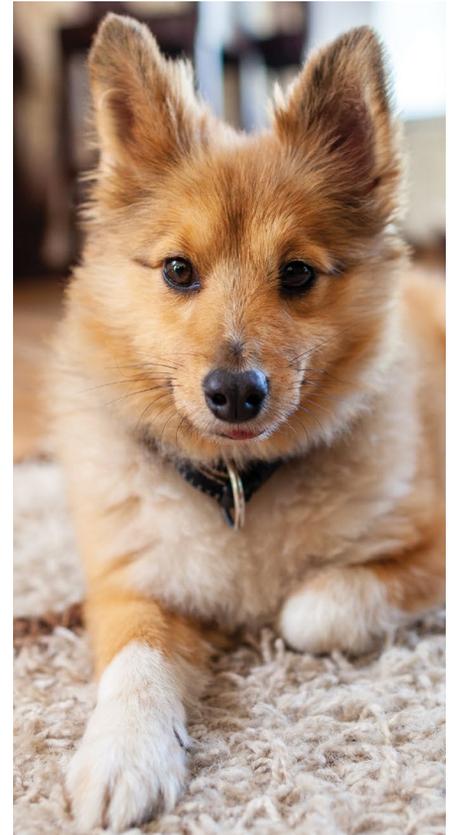
Even when pets aren't lured by their noses, they can be harmed by everyday products. Foods safe for us aren't always healthy options for dogs and cats. Xylitol found in sugarless gum, toothpaste, and peanut butter can be



deadly while cleaning products can be absorbed through paw pads or are ingested when pets groom.

Even in the yard, think pet safety! Not only is it best to use only pet-safe insecticides and fertilizers and keep pets off sprayed areas until dry, but think about run-off as well. Whether a springtime rain or a winter snowstorm, when water runs through yards, it takes chemicals with it, depositing them in gutters and puddles. Therefore, never let pets take a drink outside and wash those paws off or put booties on them to protect absorption and ingestion of harmful toxins.

Seemingly harmless items such as SPF and diaper rash ointment are also poisonous if swallowed due to the zinc they contain. Copper-coated pennies are, in fact, 97.5% zinc. When ingested, stomach acid breaks down the zinc resulting in liver toxicity, and even death, if not



quickly treated. What about dropped push pins, staples, or toothpicks lurking on the floor or thorns on the lovely vase of roses on the countertop? Puncture wounds can result turning into abscesses if not noticed and cared for.

Protecting playful cats from blind and drapery cords can prevent strangulation or potential amputation. Keeping tails out from under rocking chair rudders or recliners can prevent painful injuries. Securing window screens may not only prevent cats from rolling out of windows, but also prevent dogs from exiting the building! Take care when closing cupboards, refrigerators, ovens, and clothes dryers to ensure legs, noses or entire animals are not caught in doors.

Below is a list of many items to identify and remove or secure to protect furry friends:

Living Room

- Electric cords & remote controls can look like toys
- TVs & stereos can hurt sensitive hearing
- Falling knick-knacks, pictures, lamps
- Sharp coffee table edges
- Drapery/blind cords can strangle
- Rug chewing can result in intestinal blockages
- Rocking chairs rudders can crush paws & tail
- Fireplaces & heaters can burn or cause smoke inhalation; smokeless logs/sawdust can cause bowel obstruction; lighter fluid is toxic
- ID tags can catch in floor heating & cooling vents
- Loose window screens can result in falls

Kitchen

According to the [Pet Poison Helpline®](#), top toxins include:

- Chocolate
- Grapes, raisins, currants
- Xylitol found in sugar-free gum, toothpaste, and peanut butter
- Fatty table scraps
- Onions
- Compost
- Macadamia Nuts
- Cleaning Supplies
- Unbaked bread dough and alcohol

Also watch for:

- Stoves and ovens (They not only burn, but some pets can turn on knobs starting fires!)
- Salt, spices, and various pantry items
- Knives and sharp tools
- Cabinet doors/refrigerator/dish-washer (These can be hazardous if pets get trapped.)

Bathroom

Medications are the #1 cause of poisoning in our pets. Prescription and over-the-counter medications dangerous to pets include:

- NSAIDs (Advil, Aleve & Motrin)
- Acetaminophen (Tylenol)
- Antidepressants (Effexor, Cymbalta, Prozac, Lexapro)
- ADD/ADHD Medications (Adderall, Ritalin, Concerta)
- Benzodiazepines & Sleep Aids (Xanax, Klonopin, Ambien, Lunesta)
- Birth Control (Estrogen, Estradiol, Progesterone)
- ACE Inhibitors (Zestril, Altace)
- Beta Blockers (Tenormin, Toprol, Coreg)
- Thyroid Hormones (Armour desiccated thyroid, Synthroid)
- Cholesterol Lowering Agents (Lipitor, Zocor, Crestor)

Other possible dangers in the bathroom include:

- Medical marijuana (Of course, this could be stashed elsewhere in the home.)
- Cleaning products
- Toilets containing chemicals
- Electric outlets and appliances
- Candles
- Standing water in tubs or showers
- Dental floss (This can pose a choking hazard and intestinal blockage.)

Bedroom

- Anything that can fall (pictures, mirrors, television sets, shelving)
- Bed (A bed collapse would be dangerous if pet sleeps underneath.)
- Rug or blanket chewing
- Medications on nightstands
- Batteries (such as from hearing aids or other appliances)
- Children's toys
- Shoelaces, hair ribbons and other such pieces of clothing could be ingested

Garage & Outdoor Areas

- Paints, paint removers, cleaners of all types
- Insecticides and fertilizers (dangerous if not pet-safe)
- Car engines (where animals hide for warmth)
- Barbeques as well as charcoal, lighter fluid, matches
- Fences (Ask yourself, "Is fence tall enough, can pet dig under, is anything close enough to jump on and then over, are boards tight fitting with no sharp edges or nails protruding? Is fence-fighting a concern with a neighbor dog?")
- Gates (should be secure without a gap under or at closure for pet to squeeze through)
- Doghouse/dog run (should have no sharp edges or parasites and be well-ventilated)
- Pools, spas, and fountains (Drowning is a concern, but chemicals, such as chlorine, should also be safely stowed.)
- Electrical wiring/controls on sprinkler systems and lighting
- Hot concrete and other surfaces that can burn precious paws
- Trash cans (should have secure lids)
- Wildlife (Do you have pet friendly deterrents to keep them away?)

When you care for a pet, you care for a furry toddler whom you have the privilege of protecting. While there are always more doggie dangers and cat-astrophes to become aware of, this is a good starting point for you to watch out for as the best pet first aid is not having to do it at all!

(continued)



HUMAN FOODS FOR CATS & DOGS

PAWS OFF

- Alcoholic beverages (vomiting/diarrhea, lethargy, liver failure)
- Chocolate, Coffee/Tea (can over-stimulate central nervous system; life-threatening)
- Grapes & Raisins (acute kidney failure & death)
- Milk (lack digestive enzyme to breakdown; gas, bloating, diarrhea, stomach pain)
- Nuts (difficult to digest; some are toxic)
- Onions (damage red blood cells & kidneys)
- Salty Foods (electrolyte imbalance, kidney disease, seizures)
- Sauces & Gravies (digestive problems, pancreatitis)
- Sweet Sugary Foods (diabetes)
- Unbaked Yeast Dough (alcohol poisoning)
- Xylitol—artificial sweetener (shock & liver failure)

OKAY

- Apple slices
- Blueberries (great anti-oxidant)
- Carrots & Zucchini (cooked or raw)
- Eggs (scrambled or boiled)
- Fish (cold water fish is good source of Omega 3s)
- Green Veggies (lightly steamed or chopped fine for best digestion—broccoli, green beans, peas, kale for instance)
- Lean Red Meat (beef, lamb; no cooked bones)
- Popcorn (hold the butter and salt)
- Poultry (white meat chicken and turkey; no bones or skin)
- Non-fat Yogurt (contains gut-friendly bacteria; watch out for xylitol)

OKAY IN MODERATION

- Beans (can make dogs gassy)
- Cheese (gas, bloating, stomach pain)
- Liver (toxic in large quantities due to abundance of Vitamin A)
- Potatoes (no peels; make sure potatoes are cooked & ripe)
- Tomatoes (only if ripe; may be acidic for some pets; leaves & stems are toxic) ■





Pet First Aid & Safety

15 Situations Requiring Immediate Veterinary Care

By Denise Fleck, The Pet Safety Crusader™



For even the most attentive pet sitter, it can be challenging to decide when a pet in your care needs a veterinary visit. Getting to know the pet by performing regular head-to-tail check-ups and staying fresh on your dog, cat, bird, rabbit or other pet first aid skills may help you spot warning signs that indicate the animal is experiencing a health emergency. When in doubt, always err on the side of caution and reach out to a medical professional, but to give you guidelines, below are 15 situations that always require immediate veterinary care.



Prepare in Advance for a Pet Emergency

It is impossible for you to know when an emergency may occur but being prepared could help you provide your canine or feline patient the care needed more quickly. Follow these steps for peace of mind:

- ✓ Have the phone number and driving directions handy to the closest animal ER, along with the number for Animal Poison Control.
- ✓ Maintain a well-equipped Pet First Aid Kit and check regularly to make sure no items are expired, have leaked, or are missing.
- ✓ Frequently practice safe handling and restraint techniques on both dogs and cats and be sure to have materials needed.
- ✓ Update your Pet First Aid training every two years, as protocol changes and refreshing skills is vital.
- ✓ Have a plan in place with clients as to how medical expenses will be paid for at the time the pet is injured or becomes ill so there is no delay in getting the animal the care he needs.

When a Pet Emergency Occurs

1. Call ahead to notify the veterinary office/ animal ER of your impending arrival and the animal's condition.
2. Follow instructions provided—on how to administer first aid or otherwise make your pet as comfortable as possible.
3. Remain calm and take care to safely handle, approach and restrain (if necessary) your four-legged patient. Animals not only pick up on our emotions but often act out when they are in pain.

Signs a Pet May Be Experiencing a Health Emergency

- Breathing difficulties, coughing, or choking
- Redness or swelling
- Rapid or decreased heart rate
- Slow CRT or change in gum color (blue/grey, white, red, or yellow)
- Bleeding, pus or discharge from any orifice or part of the body
- Open wounds or broken bones
- Bloat or tenderness to the abdomen
- Excessive panting or obvious pain
- Vomiting/diarrhea/ constipation
- Straining to urinate or defecate
- Seizures or loss of balance
- Restlessness or lethargy
- Dilated or unequally dilated pupils
- Inflammation or injury to an eye or sudden blindness
- Change in normal eating/ drinking and/or elimination of waste

Anything that is not normal could be an emergency sign.

15 Situations Requiring Immediate Veterinary Care

1. **Difficulty breathing or unconscious:** If a pet in your care is struggling to breathe, breathing rapidly or barely at all, transport quickly to the nearest animal ER and be prepared to provide rescue breaths and CPR on the way!
2. **Severe bleeding:** Injuries resulting from car accidents, dog or cat fights, and from sharp objects can result in skin lacerations. If bleeding cannot be controlled within five minutes (using basic first aid protocol of direct pressure, elevation, and pressure on appropriate artery), the pet needs veterinary intervention. Additionally, if a pet coughs up blood or bleeds from the nose, eyes, ears, mouth, or rectum, or if blood is present in the urine, vomit, or diarrhea, seek medical help.

(continued)



3. **Pale, red, blue, or yellow gums or Slow CRT:** Pale gums indicate severe bleeding or cardiac arrest; red gums = heatstroke; blue imply insufficient oxygen or pulmonary arrest while yellow gums signify zinc toxicity or liver issues. If [Capillary Refill Time](#) is two seconds or longer, elevate hind quarters (unless head, chest, or spinal injury) to promote circulation, wrap pet to maintain body heat and get to the vet!
4. **Heatstroke:** On average, dogs and cats have an internal body temperature of 101°F (38.33°C), so if their temperature is 104°F (40°C) or higher, it is a medical emergency!
5. **2nd or 3rd Degree Burns** (heat, chemical or electrical): If burned tissue exhibits blisters or pus, it is a second degree burn and highly susceptible to infection. In third-degree burns the skin is black (charred) or white (think boiled chicken breast). Either case, considerable tissue damage has occurred, and the pet is in pain. Apply appropriate first aid and get to the vet!
6. **Bloat:** A distended abdomen, dry unproductive retching (other than saliva) and distress, especially in large-chested breeds, is life-threatening bloat which can be fatal as quickly as 15-minutes after onset!
7. **Exposure to toxins (poisoning):** Curiosity causes pets to eat dangerous substances. Although signs do not always present immediately, they can lead to life-threatening organ failure if treatment is not initiated quickly. Ingested, inhaled, and absorbed toxins as well as bites from venomous snakes, poisonous toads, scorpions, jelly fish, and spiders require prompt medical attention.
8. **Vomiting multiple times in 24-hour period:** An isolated episode of vomiting may be normal, but 2-3 episodes in a 24-hour period is not and warrants medical attention. If the pet has other symptoms, such as lethargy or lack of appetite, then even one episode should be evaluated by a veterinarian.
9. **Straining to urinate:** A small bladder stone can obstruct a pet's urethra, preventing him from eliminating. If not relieved quickly, toxins will accumulate, and the pet's kidneys may become compromised. Male cats are most likely to develop a urethral obstruction, but other pets can also experience this life-threatening condition. If a pet is straining to urinate, crying in the litterbox, or urinating only a few drops at a time, have them immediately checked.
10. **Seizures:** A first-time seizure or tremors lasting more than five minutes should be diagnosed. In the case of an epileptic animal, a seizure lasting longer than is normal for that pet or clusters of seizures also require a trip to the animal ER.
11. **Balance Issues:** Any pet who is staggering or unable to maintain his balance should be assessed for neurological and/or toxicological issues.
12. **Inability to walk, use a limb or obvious fractures:** Even if splinted, fractures or exposed bones, suspected muscle/tendon strains or tears need vet care. Mobility loss may involve a spinal cord injury or lack of blood flow. These conditions are excruciatingly painful and require immediate care.
13. **Eye injuries:** Dogs and cats rely heavily on their vision, and any condition that threatens their eyesight is an emergency. [Proptosis](#) or a penetrating foreign body will be evident, but any redness or irritation should also be addressed immediately.
14. **Trauma:** All blunt force injuries, as well as piercing or puncturing to the head, chest or abdomen, require immediate emergency care.
15. **Acute pain:** Whining, whimpering, or crying; shaking, hiding, or panting heavily with no other explanation; behavioral changes; and moving with an unusual posture should be diagnosed quickly by a veterinary professional.

When in doubt, get to the vet! If the pet is sick enough to be hospitalized, YOU caught the problem quickly! If it turns out treatment was not needed, both you and the pet owner have peace of mind and home care instructions to nurse the dog or cat back to their best self. ■



Safe Handling & Restraint When Administering First-Aid or Transporting an Injured Pet

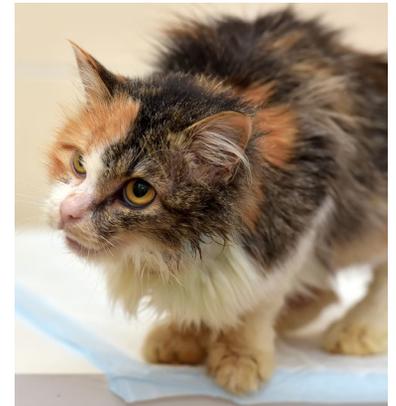
By Denise Fleck, The Pet Safety Crusader™

Effective restraint of the animals in our care is an important part of being a professional pet sitter. Whether you are merely transporting a dog or cat from one place to another or are in need of administering first aid to a sick or injured animal, there are three overarching rules to keep in mind:

1. **Use the least amount of restraint and the least amount of people as possible.** You've heard the adage, "Less is more," and that can apply here as well. Adjust the amount of control you need according to the pet's reaction and build as needed following the hierarchy below. Restrain for the behavior the pet is demonstrating, not for what you think he will do.
2. **Invade the dog's or cat's personal space as little as possible.** Make smart choices about your approach and follow through considering the pet's point of view. Remain gentle and patient.
3. When working with a partner, **always let the other person know if you are about to let go** of the animal!

Stress Responses

Animals have five reactions to stress: *fight, flight, freeze, faint, or fidget*. Fear, pain, and punishment can trigger aggression or *fight* behavior. The pet may scratch, bite, growl or hiss, fearing what you do may hurt more. He may dash off or take *flight* hoping to get away from the source of pain or to hide and lick his wounds. He may *freeze* in place before doing either of the previously mentioned behaviors or remain immobile but could turn aggressive if approached.



Certain species actually *faint* in the face of stress. Opossums and the Tennessee Fainting or Myotonic Goat are two examples. When caring for dogs and cats, it is unlikely you will deal with this behavior; however, the final response animals may exhibit is to *fidget* or become hyperactive. If prone to seizures, [stress could trigger an episode](#).

No response is an end-all as animals respond to our energy and actions. Paying attention to an animal's body language may alert you to trouble before it occurs. Happy kitty can quickly become a sour puss when you trim her nails or insert a thermometer, so always consider your movements from the pet's perspective. Towering over a pet can appear threatening while raising a hand over an animal's head to stroke them could appear to the pet like a slap is coming.

Hierarchy of Restraint

Keep this hierarchy of restraint in mind:

1. **Gentle voice and hands.** Avoid screeching or sounding gruff. Rather, speak in a calm manner coaxing the pet to come or allow you to approach. Gently hold out your hands and provide treats.
2. **Basic equipment.** This may again consist of your gentle hands but also include towel, gloves, a leash, harness, and muzzle.
3. **Confinement.** Moving a pet into a small space like a bathroom provides more control of the situation, but confinement may also include a carrier or crate in which to transport or monitor a sick or injured pet.
4. **Sedation.** Medically calming a pet may be an option once you are at the veterinary clinic, but for dogs, [canine-friendly aromatherapies](#) may assist. Keep all essential oils away from cats!

Safe Handling & Restraint Techniques Safe Approach

Inhale deeply, then exhale slowly. Doing so will help you focus and remain calm. Although you want nothing more than to help, the pet may not understand your enthusiasm. Cats and dogs are experts at reading emotional cues, so do your best to minimize their anxiety. Watch body language for signs of pain or that the animal may lunge or bite. Flattened ears, yawning, lip licking, and heavy panting are common in fearful pets.

As mentioned above, use a calm voice and treats to lure the pet out from hiding. Position your body sideways to appear less threatening, and do not make direct eye contact. Do not approach if you hear growling.

Wrangling an Injured Dog or Cat

If you have a barrier to protect yourself as you approach (a cushion for instance), get it slowly in front of you. A 6 ft. slip lead that can easily be made into a [figure 8 harness](#) is a useful tool. Place the handle through the “O” ring and drop the loop over the pet’s head. Next, bring the lead around the pet’s chest, behind his front legs and bring up the opposite side of the chest, again slipping the handle through the ring.

Small pets can be held secure by swaddling in a thick bath towel to control the head, cover the claws and prevent escape. Positioning a rolled towel under a dog’s lower jaw and wrapping the ends around his neck like a cervical collar is another option. You will still need to have a leash or other form of restraint to keep the body stationary. Doing the best with

what you have, where you are, is a first aider’s motto!



You can also [make an impromptu muzzle](#) out of any 1” wide soft fabric strip (e.g., leash, gauze roll, triangular bandage, legging, sash). Never use rope, string, cording, shoe laces, or narrow items that could cut the snout. A [tube sock can also be improvised into a muzzle](#) by cutting the foot portion lengthwise, slipping the calf portion over the dog’s muzzle and then tying the two ends you made by cutting behind the dog’s neck.

Don’t forget these important tips when muzzling an animal:

- Never leave a muzzled animal unattended—he is defenseless!
- If a muzzled animal experiences difficulty breathing, vomits or has a seizure, be prepared to remove muzzle.

Transporting an Injured Animal

If the pet you’re trying to help is a medium to large dog, and if he can get to his feet, placing a towel or even a grocery tote (split it up the sides so that it opens with a handle on each end) under the abdomen in front of the hind legs, can serve as a back-end sling to assist walking.



If the animal is immobile, a makeshift stretcher can be created by carefully sliding a towel or tarp underneath him. If you have a second pair of hands, lift the pet together by holding the towel taut to carry the pet to safety. If alone, slide a blanket gently under the pet, and on a smooth flat surface, pull one corner of the fabric carefully bringing the pet along with it.

Boards of all kinds can be used as backboards if you suspect back or neck injuries. Some car floor mats and SUV liners are quite sturdy. A storage box lid, cookie sheet, surfboard, or toboggan/sled—even the pet’s bed or bottom of his crate—could do the job. Carefully secure the pet to the board before lifting, restraining him with torn sheet fabric, leash or other straps.

Do not attempt to carry an animal on any kind of improvised backboard device if the animal is struggling or resisting the restraint as this could cause additional injury.

Practice, training and thinking on your feet can assure you safely handle a sick or injured pet, prevent further injury, keep yourself safe and transport your furry patient to the care he needs. ■



What Should You Have in Your Dog and Cat First Aid Kits?



Knowing pet first aid and having the confidence to use those skills when needed is an essential component to being a professional pet sitter. But like for a plumber or carpenter, the task goes more smoothly if you have the right tools for the job in the form of a well-equipped tool kit—a dog or cat first aid kit. Assembling the tools, though, is half the journey as a kit is only as good as the human at the other end of the leash. If you use something up, you must replace it; if something expires, get another; and know how to properly use in the appropriate dosages and how to store all items.

Having a home or office kit as well as a pet first aid kit you take on the road is savvy preparedness. At home or in the office, it is best to keep your kit in a temperate environment but readily accessible. In earthquake country, stowing your kit inside but near an outside wall is best

in case you need to dig through rubble for it. If you're in a location where flooding is likely, keeping your kit in a Styrofoam container with a lid will help it float to the surface and stay dry. For car kits or any in locations subject to increased temperatures, take care of items that can go bad. Medications, creams, adhesive wraps, and hydrogen peroxide do not hold up to warmer temperatures, so keep these items cool or replace them frequently.

Having a human first aid kit is equally important should you become injured. If you combine human and pet kits, clearly mark and be aware of which items are NOT pet-friendly! Some human items, such as bandaging materials (except for band-aids), can be safely used on our dog and cat patients, but not so with many medications. Also, your pet kit will require items not in a traditional human kit, such as a muzzle, since our animal friends may not realize we are trying to help when they are in pain.

3% Hydrogen Peroxide degrades quickly and is best stored in its original brown bottle in a refrigerator. Unopened, it can last up to 3 years, but once opened, it breaks down within 1 - 6 months. If H₂O₂ gets too warm (50°C or 122°F), it will not do the job when you need it most; however, it freezes at -34°C or 29.2F and can still be effective.

Stocking Your Dog First Aid Kit

The most basic items to include in your dog first aid kit are listed below (and I've included links to some of my favorites in the digital version of this article):

- Disposable gloves (These can keep your hands clean as well as prevent you from getting germs into a pet's wound. It's important you learn how to safely remove gloves.)
- 4" X 4" gauze squares and rolls to control bleeding and make bandages
- Adhesive tape and self-adhering vet wrap
- Styptic Powder for bleeding toenails and very shallow cuts/scrapes only
- Blunt-nosed scissors
- Tweezers or forceps for removing debris
- Specialized tick remover
- 3% Hydrogen Peroxide (consider the 2 fluid ounce packs in foil)
- Eye wash (purified water, bottled water or pure saline are best)
- Ear wash and ear dry
- Chlorhexidine/Hibiclens®
- Cold pack and hand warmers
- Triple antibiotic cream or spray
- Digital thermometer and lubricating gel
- Needleless syringe or eye dropper
- Pilling assist (whether the syringe-type or food pocket to hide pills)
- Antihistamine gel caps (diphenhydramine, loratadine or cetirizine)
- Antacid (cerenia, Pepcid, Mylanta, omeprazole or famotidine)
- Portable water bowl, bottled water, electrolytes (salt and honey)
- Antiseptic wipes
- 6 ft. slip lead
- Properly fitting muzzle or materials to improvise (long piece of fabric, tube sock, etc.)
- Towel or blanket including an aluminum blanket or waterproof tarp
- Important phone numbers and baseline vitals (You can note this information in the Pet First Aid & CPR Quick Reference Guide for Dog & Cat Parents & Pet Professionals, available on Amazon.)
- Reading glasses, magnifier, and flashlight
- Canine-specific nail clippers
- Canine-specific calming aids (Adaptil®, aromatherapy, or Rescue Remedy® pet version without alcohol)
- Ziplock bags
- Dehydrated pumpkin/ginger snaps
- Canine-specific shampoo or Dawn® Original dish soap
- Pet-specific needs (e.g., medications, epi-pen)
- Hedz-up Pet Collar flotation device (You can use coupon code: CRUSADER for 15% off)
- Various splinting materials (depending on size of pet)
- Bottled water and collapsible water bowl for hydration
- Canine-specific electrolytes or salt and sugar to DIY (see recipe on next page)



If you are unsure of how to properly use any of these items or what dosages are safe, enroll in PSI's Pet First Aid & CPR online course. If it's been a while, you might be surprised at some of the changes in protocol!

(continued)



Recipe For DIY Electrolyte Solution

INGREDIENTS

4 cups filtered or bottled water

1 teaspoon salt

1 tablespoon sugar or honey

Mix with love dissolving well. Make a new batch daily or freeze into ice cubes.

FEED

3 Tbsp for puppies or kitten

5 Tbsp up to 5 lbs.

¾ cup to 10 lbs.

¼ cup per 5 lbs. 15 lbs. and up

Customizing Your Cat First Aid Kit

For your cat first aid kit, all of the aforementioned items should be included with these exceptions:

- No 3% Hydrogen Peroxide
- No Pepcid, Mylanta, omeprazole or famotidine
- Check with your veterinarian regarding loratadine or cetirizine

Remember, you should ALWAYS check with your veterinarian, for both dogs and cats, before administering any medications.

Even the most innocuous aids could negatively interact with other medications or certain illnesses.

Additionally, add or replace the following items to your Cat First Aid Kit:

- Replace 4" X 4" gauze squares with 2" X 2" squares and cut the typical 3" gauze roll in half
- Antacid (cerenia only by prescription)
- Antihistamine gel caps (diphenhydramine only, but always check with your vet)
- Feline-specific nail clippers (smaller and more scissor-like)
- Feline-specific pheromones (Feliway® or Rescue Remedy® pet version without alcohol)
- Feline-specific shampoo or Dawn® Original dish soap
- Stethoscope (optional, but makes it easier to palpate a cat's pulse)



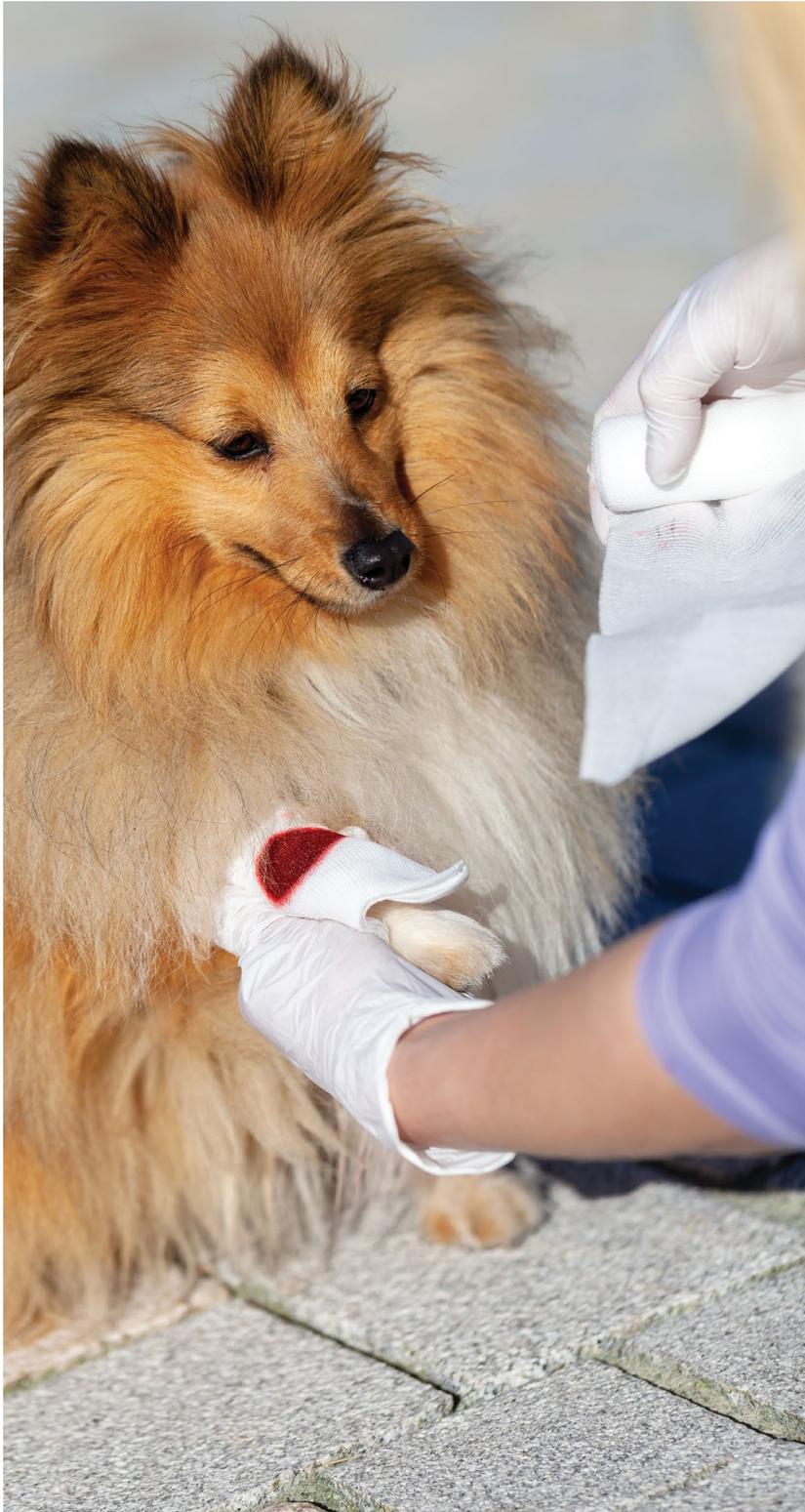
Helpful new products come on the scene all the time, so you may often find something new to add to your dog or cat first aid kit. Pick a day every year—your pet's birthday, when we turn the clocks back, the anniversary of your pet-sitting business or New Year's Day—to go through your kit(s) making sure nothing is expired or missing. You'll be grateful when you reach for that item.

When you care for a dog or cat, you are dealing with a four-legged toddler for life, and it is your responsibility to supervise where the pet goes and what he can get into. As hard as we try, "life happens," so you need to be able to rush to the rescue. Having the right tool for the job can allow you to provide the best care, as well as peace of mind, until veterinary assistance is available. ■



Responding to Bleeding Injuries

By Denise Fleck, The Pet Safety Crusader™



Centuries ago, maybe longer, warriors who fainted on the battlefield were passed over as they appeared dead and therefore, their lives may have been spared. Panic and/or the sight of blood caused their blood pressure and heart rate to quickly drop, shutting down the brain due to lack of oxygen. Known as *vasovagal syncope* (vay-zoh-VAY-gul SING-kuh-pee), this reaction overpowers the fight or flight response and triggers fainting at the sight of blood or great emotional distress.

Fainting, though, is not what professional pet sitters want to occur when their furry charge needs them most, so below are ways to respond to bleeding injuries in cats and dogs.

A severed **artery** can cause extensive bleeding as it forcefully spurts under pressure from the heart. Oxygen-rich blood will be bright red in color, and controlling blood loss, bandaging to prevent infection, and getting veterinary treatment must occur quickly without the caregiver succumbing to vasovagal syncope!

Thinner yet larger in diameter, **veins** carry darker-colored blood leaving oxygen along the way and collecting waste on its return route to the lungs. Typically, venous blood pools rather than spurting, but the same protocol should be adhered to...control bleeding, bandage to prevent infection, and quickly get to veterinary care.

Capillaries are so small that sometimes only a few red blood cells can pass through their center at a time. Therefore, most ooze rather than bleed, requiring only superficial cleaning, antibiotic cream and maybe a bandage to keep dirt and infection at bay.

When blood pools under the skin in a pocket or sack, this is called a **hematoma** and requires veterinary aspiration or, sometimes, surgery. Hematomas occur most commonly when floppy dogs' ears shake against a hard surface.



Action Steps for Minor Cuts and Scrapes

1. Trim fur with blunt-nosed scissors to reveal wound unless proficient with electric shaver.
2. Flush with water and Hibiclens® or another pet-safe antibacterial cleaner.
3. Pat dry and apply antibacterial cream, species-specific spray, or pure aloe vera gel to promote healing. Apply just enough to cover wound so that it will soak in, not leaving excess to be licked off. Prevent licking with a cone collar, by using self-adhering wrap impregnated with a bitter taste, or other device. For an injury, no matter how small, watch for signs of infection (i.e., redness, swelling, oozing or heat) and get veterinary care should they arise.

If a toenail trim results in bleeding, pour a dime- to quarter-sized amount of styptic powder into the palm of your hand pressing affected nail into the powder.

Action Steps for Severe Bleeding Injuries

1. Apply direct pressure with gauze squares directly over the wound. If bleeding continues...
2. Elevate injured area by placing a pillow or folded towel underneath, keeping it higher than animal's heart. Still bleeding?
3. Use **pressure points** which are major arteries close to the surface of a pet's skin. Applying pressure on the artery corresponding to the injury will lessen blood loss.
4. Once bleeding is controlled, wrap flat gauze with rolled gauze, overlapping each layer by $\frac{3}{4}$, then secure with self-adhering elastic bandage. If bandage is too tight, swelling may occur above or below the bandage. Prevent restricting circulation by applying bandage loose enough to fit two fingers underneath.

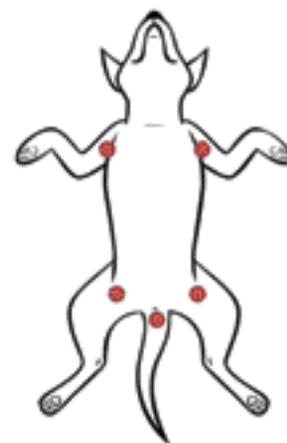
Controlling a bleed can take 5 - 10 minutes, but if excessive blood loss is occurring, maintain direct pressure and transport immediately to nearest animal ER!

Pressure Points on Dogs and Cats

Brachial Artery: Place your thumb on the outside of the upper leg and middle fingers on the inside close to the armpit to reduce blood flow and allow clotting to occur in a forelimb.

Femoral Artery: Turn pet on side if possible, place middle fingers in the groin of appropriate hind leg applying pressure.

Caudal Artery: With pet in your lap or supported against your body (head towards your rear), lift the tail for elevation, then apply pressure firmly with your thumb on top (at the base where tail meets the body) and two or three fingers directly underneath.



Lingual Artery: This vessel is located in the tongue and can be injured during face trauma (e.g., deployed airbag) or when licking sharp objects. Applying pressure to the tongue is difficult, but flour or corn starch may assist clotting. Keeping pet calm is key, and providing ice or cold water until you reach veterinary care may work best.

Bandaging Dog and Cat Legs

After securing rolled gauze around appropriate limb, wrap once around the lower abdomen (hind legs) or around chest for injuries to a front limb to prevent bandage from sliding down leg. Wrap again around wound and secure with self-stick compression wrap.



(continued)



Bandaging Paws

Remove obvious debris and flush to clean if only oozing, but if bleeding profusely, stop blood loss by elevating and applying pressure to brachial or femoral artery if needed. Wrap paw with gauze encircling pad, and carefully between toes in a figure eight pattern to hold in place. Continue past ankle joint before securing with self-adhering wrap. The flex wrap's texture will provide traction for walking and if used to cover toes, may prevent pet from pulling off bandage. An appropriately sized human sock is an alternative.

Post veterinary care, bandage must be kept dry! Rubber glove, press 'n seal or a plastic bag can keep paw dry when going outside, but do not secure tightly and promptly remove. Dogs and cats sweat through their paw pads and need a breathable bandage or bacteria will grow!



Ear Injuries

Think opposites! Apply pressure to bleed, then press "upright" ears down towards the side of the face or cheek. Flip floppy "downward" ears up where they fall naturally on the neck or head for direct pressure.

Ears are higher than the heart, so elevation is built in. Secure bandage by using uninjured ear as the anchor: first pass around head in front of that ear and next behind. Finish off with a "headband" cut from the sleeve off a t-shirt, by cutting toe off a sock or a band from leggings to fit over the ears and hold bandage in place.

For small knicks or cuts to the ear, styptic powder or clotting aids may be used to control bleeding, but never in a deep or large wound.



Tail Injuries

Apply direct pressure to tail wound, lift tail to elevate and press on caudal artery, if needed, to diminish blood flow. Wrap tail with gauze roll before slipping a child's-size tube sock over injury. Securing adhesive tape to fur (opposite side of wound) and folding it back on itself (think double-stick tape) will aid gauze roll in attaching.

Chest Injuries

Unfortunately, elevation is not applicable nor is there a pressure point as many blood vessels cross this area of the body making direct pressure most important. Wrap gauze around torso to hold in place and secure with adhesive tape taking care not to interfere with breathing. Doubly secure with a triangular bandage knotted to hold in place. A snug fitting t-shirt or special pet surgical suit are great alternatives.

Bleeding injuries can be a challenge, but with a well-stocked pet first aid kit, practicing on patients BEFORE they need you, and finding your best method to remain calm, you can become a pet's hero! Just practice safe handling and restraint to prevent a human first aid incident. ■



Cold Weather Dangers: Frostbite, Anti-Freeze Poisoning & De-Icing

Even though winter can be a magical time of year, it comes with its own dangers, so keep it safe and merry by protecting furry bodies and the precious paws they walk on from temperature changes and chemicals! As a pet-care professional, it's important to keep these cold weather dangers in mind.



Frostbite and Hypothermia

Dogs and cats do not usually vocalize when body parts get numb. We only discover their predicament once they are hesitant to step on their now painful paws or when we notice tissue has become hard and dark. Think of ground meat in your grocery store—soft and pink when you buy it—but toss it in the freezer, and a few hours later, it is hard to the touch and darker in appearance. **Frostbite** is a condition in which the skin, and tissue right below, freezes, so when your four-legged client is in a too cold environment, his body responds by reducing blood flow to the extreme parts of his body, channeling blood to the vital organs. This decrease in warmth to the paws, ears, tail and even genitalia, allows ice crystals to form in the tissues.

Often confused as the same ailment, **hypothermia** can contribute to frostbite or be a condition itself. *Hypo*, meaning less than or not enough, and *thermia* referring to body temperature, describes a dog or cat whose body temperature is below the normal range of 100.4 – 102.5 F (38 - 39.17° C) potentially damaging internal organs leading to death. Wet and windy conditions make cold temperatures even colder, especially for an older pet whose immune system may not be as robust as it once was, but cold injuries do not discriminate as younger pets can also be affected.

How can you prevent these conditions?

Limit time outdoors. On walks, keep hand warmers available to periodically warm ear flaps. Promptly remove snow and ice from between the toes and never let pets out in the winter unsupervised. Take extra care with senior pets and those suffering from heart and/or kidney conditions which can make them less tolerant of temperature changes. You may be surprised to learn that many [large breeds are sensitive to cold weather](#).

Protect their paws. Properly fitting, waterproof [pet shoes or socks](#) can protect while outdoors, just understand there is a learning curve for many pets regarding footwear.

Use sweaters and coats. Pets without an undercoat benefit from wearing a sweater outdoors for even short periods of time. Not only does it prevent cold from getting into their bones, but it helps retain body heat. Temperatures of 32° F / 0° C or below are too cold for a dog or cat to withstand but some pets may be affected even before temperatures drop that low.

Provide extra care for outdoor pets. Although it is always best for animal clients to have a warm indoor bed, outdoor dogs and cats must have well-insulated [dry bedding for winter](#) (straw is a popular choice), and their caloric intake should be increased by at least 25% to help generate necessary body heat lost trying to stay warm. Not so for indoor [pets who are less active in winter](#) and may even pack on weight.

What are the signs of these conditions?

Shivering, increased breathing and heart rate followed by shallow breathing, a slow heart rate, delayed reflexes, dilated pupils and loss of consciousness are all signs of a too low body temperature. Frostbite presents with extremities (e.g., paws, ear tips, tail, genitalia) hard to the touch, painful and pale to gray, although may not be quickly noticed under fur. Once affected areas defrost, the skin will redden and become tender. In severe cases, tissue turns black within a few days and dies making surgical intervention necessary.

What action steps should you take?

If you believe a pet in your care is suffering from one of these conditions, take these steps:

- Remove the pet from the cold environment.
- Wrap frozen body parts with blankets briefly tumbled in a warm (but NOT hot) clothes dryer as you head to veterinary care. Rewarming must be done carefully while monitoring body temperature. [Rewarming shock](#) can occur if body temperature rises too rapidly, increasing blood pressure and compromising the circulatory system. [After drop](#) occurs when body temperature continues to decline as the rewarmed blood pushes cold blood from the extremities to the core organs.
- Lower affected area by placing pet in your lap or on a sofa to promote circulation. Never massage hardened tissue and do not use a heating pad or hot water bottle as damage to nerves and blood vessels may occur.
- Get to veterinary care as furry patients may experience an accelerated heart rate from the pain and even self-mutilated their paws and tail as the circulation returns. Antibiotics and pain relief medication may be prescribed. In severe cases, amputation or surgical removal of affected tissue is not uncommon.



Antifreeze Poisoning

Antifreeze is a colored liquid that when mixed with water, helps maintain an even temperature in your car's engine. It prevents corrosion and lowers the freezing point of liquid and is not intended for canine or feline consumption! Ethylene glycol (EG) makes up about 95 percent of antifreeze and gives it a sweet taste. It can also be found in engine coolant, motor oil, de-icing salts, hydraulic brake and windshield washing fluids, developing solutions for photography, paints, solvents, and snow globes! Dogs and wildlife love the sweetness and will lap up a spill off the garage floor. Cats are more likely to ingest by grooming after walking through antifreeze. Even if antifreeze contains a [bittering agent](#), it is still toxic and may be ingested.

How can you prevent antifreeze poisoning?

With no way to know if antifreeze leaked from a neighbor's car is the slightly safer propylene glycol (PG), it is safest to keep pets away from all drips and wash paws after walks. As little as 1-Tablespoon of ethylene glycol can result in kidney failure in dogs while only 1-teaspoon can be fatal to cats.

What are the signs of antifreeze poisoning?

Within 30 minutes to 12-hours, a dog or cat may exhibit drooling, vomiting, lack of coordination, twitching, excessive thirst and urination. Within 12-24 hours for cats and 36-72 hours for dogs, these signs may subside while the kidneys begin to fail along with loss of appetite, lethargy, drooling, seizures and coma.

(continued)



What action steps should you take?

Any exposure requires immediate veterinary care even if pet has vomited! You may be advised to induce vomiting in dogs (as first responders, under no circumstances do we induce vomiting in cats), or just head to the ER. Never induce vomiting if the dog is unconscious, experiencing breathing difficulty or exhibiting signs of distress or shock. When too much time lapses, EG poisoning may be fatal without [hemodialysis](#), a process where the animal's blood is pumped out of their body into a machine, and then returned to their body after being filtered of toxins.

De-icing Salts

Similar to antifreeze in that they lower the freezing point of water, de-icing salts consist of salt (i.e., sodium, magnesium calcium and potassium chlorides), alcohols and glycols, yes even ethylene glycol!

The tragedy is that ingesting as little as ½-Tablespoon for a small dog or cat, or 3-Tablespoons for an extra-large dog can be fatal!



How can you prevent pets from ingesting de-icing salts?

Avoid surfaces coated with chemicals when taking walks, and accustom dogs to shoes when walking on snow melt. If pet refuses paw attire, wash paws with a warm damp washcloth, and then dry after every walk. Trim hair between pads to prevent chemicals and ice from sticking. Apply paw wax before going out, but wipe clean after walks.

Kitty litter and gravel won't melt ice, but both may prevent people and pets from slipping. Better yet, encourage clients to use [Safe-T-Pet® Ice Melt®](#), developed by veterinarians, completely free of salt and chloride, and is effective to 10°F / -12.2°C. Do not let

pets drink from puddles or eat snow, as both could contain these toxic chemicals.

What are the signs a pet has ingested de-icing salts?

With toxic doses, typically within 3 hours of ingestion, signs presenting include: burns to the lips and skin, cracked paw pads, vomiting, diarrhea, lethargy, shortness of breath, disorientation and seizures.

What action steps should you take if a pet has ingested de-icing salts?

Quickly get pet to the vet where treatment for *hypernatremia* (too much salt) will include IV fluids and monitoring electrolyte and blood levels.

Don't forget that refreshing your [pet first aid skills](#) is the best way to be prepared for the dogs and cats you care for any time of the year! ■