

# GRESHAM ANIMAL HOSPITAL

## Basic First-Aid Booklet

### HOW TO APPROACH AN INJURED ANIMAL

1. First and foremost protect yourself! If you become injured it will be harder to help the injured animal. Injured animals often become defensive and may become aggressive.
2. Approach the animal slowly and talk in a calm, soothing voice.
3. Always muzzle an animal in pain or have someone restrain the head before examining the injured area. This is important even with your own pet as all animals can bite when injured. Place a commercial muzzle or a fabric muzzle (gauze/nylons) before trying to move an injured dog. A cat can be wrapped in a large towel or blanket for transport. Do not place a muzzle on an animal that is having difficulty breathing or vomiting. Try to assess the nature of the emergency as quickly as possible. Use the information in this book to help stabilize and transport the animal. Call a veterinarian as soon as possible and seek professional care for your pet immediately.

### First Aid Kit

Being prepared with a few basic items will help in an emergency situation:

1. Tweezers, multi-tool with scissors
2. Muzzle/nylons + leash
3. Rectal thermometer
4. Sterile saline (contact lens solution)
5. Roll gauze and gauze sponges
6. Adhesive tape
7. Antibiotic ointment
8. Latex gloves
9. Large towel or blanket
10. Flashlight

### HOUSEHOLD MEDICATIONS

Do not give your pet any medications (Advil, Tylenol, Aspirin, Pepto Bismol, Lomotil, etc.) without checking with a veterinarian first. Many human drugs are toxic to animals and could interfere with medications that a veterinarian would use to help your pet.

### NORMAL PHYSICAL EXAM

Heart and circulation: A pet's normal gum color should be pink. White, lavender, grey or blue gums indicate that a pet is not circulating blood adequately. Other indicators that a pet's heart or blood flows are abnormal include poor or absent pulses and an abnormal heart rate or rhythm.

### CARDIAC

Signs: Collapse, weakness, bluish or gray gum color, rapid/slow heart rate, increased respiratory rate, coughing, respiratory distress, vomiting.

Action: Call and seek veterinary care immediately. Such emergencies should not be taken lightly as they are often life threatening. Limit your pet's activity; carry them if possible.

### URINARY

Signs: Frequent urination or straining, blood in urine, difficulty urinating, vomiting, lethargy, abdominal pain, vocalizing.

Action: Animals can develop urinary blockage and infections similar to people. Often times straining to urinate can be confused with constipation. Male cats are particularly prone to urinary blockages. These cases are true emergencies. All cats and dogs with difficulty passing urine must be seen by a veterinarian as soon as possible.

### DIARRHEA

Diarrhea can be due to stress, a change in the animal's diet or an underlying medical problem. Diarrhea can often be a symptom of a more serious illness or disease. Make sure that your pet continues to drink water. If the diarrhea persists for more than 12–24 hours, seek veterinary care. It is best to feed a pet with diarrhea a bland diet; an example bland diet that works includes plain white rice and white chicken meat (with no skin) that is fed in small amounts. If your pet is showing other signs of illness (i.e., vomiting/lethargy/weakness) do not wait —seek veterinary care immediately.

### SHOCK AND TRAUMA

Shock is the condition where there is a lack of oxygen in the body's tissues. This can be from blood loss or problems with distribution of blood in the body. Common emergencies that can cause shock in pets include trauma, bloat, infection,

hyperthermia, poison ingestion and severe allergic reactions. Most animals that undergo trauma are in shock. Heart rate and respiratory rate are often high; pets are often dazed and may not respond normally. Many pets may appear to be normal but internal injuries may have occurred

Signs: Pale or white gum color, very high or very low heart rate (>180, less than 60 in a dog), often increased respiratory rate, weak pulses, limbs may feel cool and the pet is quiet and lethargic. \* Cats often have a low heart rate (<160) and a low body temperature when they are in shock.

Action: Keep the pet calm and transport immediately to a veterinary clinic. Control all evidence of external bleeding with direct pressure. Wrap pets that are cold in warm blankets.

#### VOMITING AND ABDOMINAL PAIN

Look for signs of foreign material or strange food in the vomit. When you call the veterinarian, let them know if your pet has eaten any foreign objects or new foods. Rest the stomach for 4–6 hours by offering no food or water. Then try small amounts of water and bland food every 2 hours. A bland food diet for pets includes the following: plain white rice, white chicken meat (no skin) and canine or feline canned w/d or low residue food. If the pet eats this bland food well with no vomiting, they can be kept on his diet for 24 hours. After 24 hours, slowly transition them back to their regular food by mixing the bland food and regular diet together (mixing in larger amounts of regular food with decreasing amounts of bland food). If vomiting persists, or your pet has unproductive vomiting (retching) or abdominal distension, see your veterinarian immediately.

Signs: Whining, listlessness, restlessness, lethargy, arching back, unable to get comfortable, vomiting, diarrhea, bloated or distended abdomen. \* Unproductive retching in a medium–large breed dog is a true emergency.

Action: Do not give your pet food or water—this may induce vomiting and make the condition worse. Abdominal pain can be very serious and is often life-threatening if not addressed as soon as possible. Limit the activity of your pet. You can put small pets in a box or carrier. Call a veterinarian and seek professional help as soon as possible.

ALLERGIC REACTIONS Signs: Fever, vomiting, diarrhea, hives, scratching, chewing at feet, swollen face or puffiness around eyes, trouble breathing, weakness, collapse.

Action: Call a veterinarian immediately. Allergic reactions should be treated as soon as possible to prevent shock. An exam by a veterinarian should still be performed on your pet, even if the reaction gets better. Allergic reactions can result from a variety of causes including insect bites or stings, food reactions, environmental issues and vaccines.

Tip: Vaccines can cause both mild and severe allergic reactions in pets. Some of these reactions can happen immediately and others within hours (or days) of the vaccine. If your pet has a history of vaccine reactions discuss this with your regular veterinarian; altering the vaccine protocol may be recommended.

#### INSECT BITES

Like people, animals vary in their reactions to insect venom. For small local reactions, there is swelling and pain at the sting site but no other clinical signs. Try to remove stinger while keeping the pet calm, clean the site and then apply ice. Monitor your pet closely for the next several hours to make sure no further swelling or breathing problems occur. For large local reactions where there is swelling of the face, a limb, or “hives” all over the body, keep the pet calm and transport them to a veterinary facility immediately. If you are several hours from a veterinarian, contact a veterinary clinic by phone and they may recommend administering antihistamines (Diphenhydramine/Benadryl) while you are en route to the hospital. Severe life-threatening toxic reactions that occur when a pet is the victim of multiple stings at once (as occur when they disturb a ground dwelling yellow jacket’s nest). First and foremost, do not put yourself between a pet and a swarm of bees or wasps. If the swarm is still present, have trained personnel wearing full safety gear rescue the pet. Once the majority of insects have left the victim, throw a blanket over the pet and transport them to a veterinary facility ASAP.

#### BITE WOUNDS/BLEEDING WOUNDS

Signs: The appearance of wounds and skin trauma may vary from injury to injury, but redness, swelling and dirt inside the wound are common features.

Action: Approach the animal slowly. Muzzle the animal or have someone restrain the head. Examine the entire animal for bleeding, bite wounds or pain. Multiple bite wounds can be hard to find under thick fur. Cat bite/scratch wounds are often subtle and appear as small puncture wounds. Flush each bite wound with saline (clean water will do) and transport the pet to a hospital for further care. Bite wounds are very prone to becoming infected and your pet should be examined for signs of infection and further injury deep to the wound. Apply direct pressure to bleeding wounds with gauze or a clean towel/cloth. Wrap large wounds prior to transport; small wounds can be left uncovered. If your pet has an impalement injury (penetration with a foreign object like a stick, arrow etc) do not remove the object. Wrap large wounds for transport; small wounds can be left uncovered. Seek immediate veterinary care if your pet gets bitten by a snake or spider.

#### FRACTURES

Signs: Pain, not using a limb, or limb looks abnormally bent or swollen.

Action: Muzzle the animal or have someone restrain the head. Check the limb for open wounds or bleeding. If the wound is bleeding excessively, apply pressure with a towel or other available (clean) material and try not to move the limb. Do not pull on the limb in an attempt to align the fracture; such action can result in further injury and increased bleeding. Stabilize the limb if possible—magazines/newspapers etc can be used as splints for support but incorrect placement of a splint can lead to further injury. Carry your pet if possible to prevent weight bearing on the limb and seek professional help. Do not give any pain medications to your pet (some are toxic to animals) unless instructed to do so by a veterinarian. Avoid wrapping the leg (unless large wounds are present) as it is easy to impede blood circulation.

#### SEIZURES

Signs: Shaking (uncontrollably), tremors, strange facial movements, inability to stand, and paddling (swimming action) with paws, loss of bowel or urinary control, or acting distant or unresponsive to voice or touch.

Action: do not try to restrain your pet during an episode. Keep your hands away from your pet's mouth to avoid an accidental bite injury. Move objects (i.e., things that may fall or have sharp edges) away from a pet that may cause injury during the seizure. Call a veterinarian immediately and transport them to a veterinary hospital as soon as possible.

#### EARS

Signs: Scratching at ears, shaking head, whining, head tilting, swollen/puffy ear flaps, strange odor or discharge from ear(s).

Action: Try to prevent your pet from scratching at their ears or shaking their head excessively as this can make the problem worse. Have your pet seen by a veterinarian to perform a full exam of the inside and the outside of the ear. Always avoid getting water in your dog's ears. Ask your veterinarian for an ear 'drying' agent if your pet loves playing in water.

#### EYES

Signs: Squinting, discharge/tearing, redness, swelling, bleeding, different pupil size.

Action: If there is an obvious wound or foreign object in or around the eye, seek veterinary care immediately. do not try to bandage the laceration or remove the object. If the source of the irritation is known to be a chemical or fine debris/dirt, flush the eye(s) with sterile saline (or clean water) immediately for 5 to 10 minutes and then seek veterinary care. Prevent further trauma by placing an "e-collar" on your pet if there is one available. Eye injuries and infections can get worse very quickly. immediate diagnosis and treatment is critical in order to preserve your pet's eyesight.

#### RESPIRATORY

Signs: Collapse, weakness, bluish or gray gum color, labored, rapid or shallow breathing, coughing, anxiety, vomiting, wheezing.

Action: Call and seek veterinary care immediately. Keep yourself and your pet calm. Ensure that the pet is in a cool environment during transport and do not give anything orally. Difficulty breathing can result from many conditions including heart failure, lung disease, and/or blockage of the airways. Such emergencies should

be taken seriously as they are often life-threatening. If there is a recent history of your pet chewing/swallowing something and you are suspicious that they are choking, use caution and look in your pet's mouth for any foreign object that may be obstructing the airway. Only try to remove the object if it is easily reachable. Any exam of the oral cavity must be done with caution as bite injuries are very possible. Prevention tip: Cats are more susceptible than dogs to inflammatory changes in their airways, or feline asthma. Cats with asthma are very sensitive to aerosol sprays, cleaners, incense, potpourri, cigarette smoke, perfumed cat litter and dust. Use of these should be avoided in a cat's environment.

#### NEUROLOGIC

Signs: Inability to use limb(s), inability to stand, circling, seizures, head tilt, abnormal behavior, tremors.

Action: Seek veterinary care as soon as possible. Neurologic disease is difficult to treat and is often very serious. If your pet is unable to walk, carry them to the car. If they are too big to carry, use a towel (under the abdomen, in front of rear legs) to support the hind end or use a heavy blanket as a stretcher to carry them to the car. Professional diagnosis and treatment is recommended as soon as possible. Prevention tip: Possible toxins that can cause neurological signs (tremors/seizures) include moldy walnuts, mushrooms, compost, snail and slug bait.

#### Emergencies

##### HEAT

Dogs are more susceptible to rapid changes in climate conditions and overheating than humans. They sweat ineffectively and rely on panting to dissipate heat. Dogs with shorter faces (i.e., English & French bulldogs, Pugs, Boxers), dogs with thick hair coats (i.e., Akita, Husky) and dogs with underlying medical conditions or who are obese are at an increased risk of heat exhaustion injury. Cats are typically not affected by heat stress injuries.

Signs: Excessive panting or salivation, lethargy, inability to stand, weakness, lack of coordination, vomiting, diarrhea, bright red tongue/gums, disorientation; body temp > 105 F.

Action: Move your pet out of the direct sun to a shady area as soon possible and keep them calm. Do not try to get them to stop panting as this is how they cool themselves. Gently spray or apply cool, tepid water to the overheated dog. Do not use ice water, ice baths or apply ice to an overheated dog. You can also apply wet, cool towels along the dog's chest, abdomen, between its legs and around the neck. Once cooling measures are initiated, monitor the dog's rectal temperature every 2-3 minutes. Once the body temperature has decreased to 103-104, stop active cooling measures. Encourage an overheated dog to drink but do not force them

to drink. Air conditioning and fans are also both effective ways to cool an overheated dog. Once initial cooling measures have been started seek veterinary care immediately. Dehydration of any cause can lead to shock or organ damage. Temperatures in your pet above 105.5 F can be life-threatening. Also, light colored animals can get sunburned just like people. Ask your veterinarian for a recommended sunscreen for your pet.

#### POISONING SYMPTOMS

Here are some symptoms your pet might show if they have ingested a poison:

1. Weakness
2. Disorientation
3. Vomiting
4. Tremors
5. Seizures
6. Salivation (excessive)

If you witness your pet ingesting a poison or if you suspect your pet has been poisoned, call a veterinarian immediately. If the source of the poisoning is known, keep the container beside you when calling the veterinarian as information on the packaging is important in order to determine the appropriate treatment. If the source is unknown and your pet is showing suspicious symptoms, seek veterinary care for your pet immediately. Treatment to counteract the poison or its effects should be started as soon as possible. If possible, bring the suspected toxic agent with you to the doctor. If you cannot reach a local veterinarian or if you have questions as to whether a substance is toxic to your pet, you can contact the NAPCC (National Animal Poison Control Center) at 888-426-4435; they have veterinary toxicologists available at all hours to answer questions for a moderate fee (approximately \$70). Please make a note of the case number provided by poison control as your veterinarian will need it for reference.

#### TOXINS

Outlined below are several items commonly found in many households that are toxic to pets and the clinical signs pets will show when they have ingested them. Make certain that these items are removed from areas to which your pet has access. If your pet has ingested these products (or is suspected of ingesting these products and is showing the symptoms outlined below), transport them to a veterinarian asap. Remember to bring the suspected toxic agent with you to the veterinary clinic.

Antifreeze (ethylene glycol): Pets love the sweet taste! The ingestion of a small amount can be fatal as the antifreeze will cause nervous system and kidney damage. Signs of poisoning include staggering, lethargy, excessive drinking and seizures. An antidote exists but must be given within hours after ingestion to be effective and save a pet's life.

Snail and slug bait: Signs include nervousness, hyper excitability, drooling, tremors, rapid heart rate and seizures.

Chocolate: Chocolate (especially semi-sweet, dark, bittersweet, and baker's chocolate) and cocoa mulch (used in garden landscaping) all contain a substance that is toxic to dogs. If ingested, these items can cause nervous stimulation, tremors, rapid heart rate and seizures. Contact NAPCC or a veterinarian if your dog ingests chocolate-containing products to determine if the amount ingested is dangerous for your pet.

Rat poisons: Some rat poisons cause bleeding whereas others cause severe brain damage. Because some of these poisons have a delayed effect, you may not see signs your pet has been poisoned for 3-5 days. If your pet is bleeding from the mouth, nose or rectum or is weak or disoriented, transport them (don't forget the package of suspected toxin!) to the veterinarian asap.

OTC Pain Relievers: Acetaminophen (Tylenol) can cause red blood cell and liver damage (especially in cats), Advil (ibuprofen) can cause kidney damage, and Excedrin/Bufferin (aspirin) can cause gastrointestinal problems and bleeding disorders (especially in dogs) and central nervous system problems (in cats).

Raisins/Grapes/Currents (and items containing raisins and grapes such as trail mix): Even small amounts of these products can cause kidney damage or kidney failure in your pet.

Onion: (also scallions, onion soup mix, garlic, Allium bulbs) These can cause red blood cell destruction and anemia if ingested by pets.

Xylitol: This is a sugar-free sweetener being used in an increasing number of human products, from chewing gum to pudding to baked goods. Even small amounts of xylitol can cause dangerously low blood sugar levels and liver damage in dogs. Symptoms include vomiting, weakness, abdominal discomfort, collapse and seizures.

Topical Flea and Tick Products: Over-the-counter flea and tick products typically contain permethrins, which can cause cats to tremor, twitch, drool and even seizure (especially when a product that is labeled "for use on dogs-only" is applied to cats). If cats are showing any of the listed symptoms, owners should wash pets with mild dish soap (i.e., Dawn), wrap them in a towel and bring them into a veterinary clinic.

Plants: There are many potentially toxic plants to pets. Some cause only mild gastrointestinal upset, whereas others can cause severe organ damage. Just a few of the common plants which may be toxic to pets include: Easter Lily, Tiger Lily, and many other Lily species: All parts of the plant can cause life-threatening kidney damage to cats!

Rhododendron/Azalea: Can cause GI upset, slow heart rate and shock.

Sago Palm (house plant in the pnw): can cause drooling, vomiting, liver failure.

Dumbcane, Dieffenbachia (house plants): Can cause intense burning and swelling of mouth and tongue.

Mistletoe: Can cause vomiting, diarrhea, and liver damage.

Castor Beans: Can cause severe GI upset, shock, death.

Daffodils, hyacinth, amaryllis, and other bulb plants: Can cause drooling, vomiting, abdominal pain, diarrhea.

Delphinium and Monkshood: Can cause GI upset, tremors, seizures, death. If you have a question as per whether a plant is toxic for your pet, contact either your local veterinarian, vca, or look on the napcc website for a “poisonous plant” link.

#### SALMON POISONING

This toxicity is unique to the Pacific Northwest; raw fish in the Pacific NW can carry an infectious organism (rickettsia) that can cause illness in pets.

Signs: Fever, lethargy, bloody diarrhea. Signs often appear 5–7 days after ingesting a raw fish, or parts of a raw fish.

Action: Avoid feeding dogs raw salmonid-type fish (such as salmon, trout or steelhead) and don’t allow dogs to forage alongside the river/lake when fishing or hiking. Seek immediate veterinary advice if your dog ingests raw fish.

#### LEAVING YOUR PET AT HOME WHILE TRAVELING

If someone is taking care of your pet while you are away, be certain to leave a phone number where you can be reached as well as the phone number of your veterinarian. Make certain the pet-sitter is aware of any health issues and financial limits for veterinary care in case of an emergency.

#### TRAVELING WITH YOUR PET

1. Have your veterinarian examine your pet prior to traveling to make certain he or she is physically able to handle the associated stress.
2. Familiarize yourself with any pet related restrictions or requirements imposed by airlines, hotels and destination sites prior to traveling.
3. Remember to pack your pet’s food and supplies (leashes, medications, water dishes, bedding, and litter).
4. Make certain that your pet is wearing identification tags at all times in case he or she becomes lost. Permanent identification microchips which are injected under the pet’s skin are available from most veterinarians. Also carry a photo of your pet with you. Bring this emergency booklet, a first aid kit and the phone number of your veterinarian in case an emergency should arise.
5. Pets riding inside cars with people should wear seat belts or be secured in a crate. A pet can hurt themselves or other passengers in the car if you slam on the brakes. The safest place to secure your dog is in the middle of the back seat as front seat air bags can be dangerous for pets.
6. Pets should not be allowed to stick their head out of a car window as flying debris can damage their eyes, ears, face or neck.
7. Pets should never be transported unrestrained on the outside of a vehicle, like the bed of a pickup truck.
8. Never leave your pet unattended in a parked car—especially on hot days when heat stroke can occur.
9. When you arrive at your destination, evaluate your pet for illness or injury. Seek veterinary advice immediately if something seems wrong.

ASPCA Poison Control 1-888-426-4435