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Are You Prepared for Emergencies with a Pet First Aid Kit?

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By Dr. Becker

If you're like most people, having a first aid kit handy is not something you're terribly concerned about -- until you really need one. And a first aid kit for four-legged family members may be the furthest thing from your mind.

But when faced with an emergency involving a beloved family pet, many people literally cannot think straight. And the more dire the situation, the less able they are to be effective. That's why having a pet first aid kit prepared and easily accessible for emergencies is an excellent idea. It can take some of the guesswork and wheel spinning out of the equation, while also providing tools that can help you help your pet.

And what you might not realize is that a pet first aid kit is a snap to put together, and you never know -- it might just help you save the life of your precious companion one day.

Getting Started: A Clear Plastic Container and an Emergency Phone List

It's a good idea to keep the contents of your pet's first aid kit in a clear plastic container so that one quick glance will tell you you've found what you're looking for. A very inexpensive solution is a good-sized plastic zipper bag big enough to hold the supplies listed below, including a bath size cotton towel.

The first thing you'll need for your kit is an emergency telephone list with the following information:

- The phone number and address of your pet's veterinarian.
- The phone number and address (and directions, if necessary) to the closest emergency animal hospital.
- The phone number of your local animal ambulance or transportation service, if one is available.
- The Animal Poison Control hotline at 1-888-426-4435.

You can either tape the list to the outside of the kit, or place it inside, positioned where you can read it without even having to open the kit.

Recommended Supplies for Your Pet's First Aid Kit

A **muzzle** the right size for your pet. It may seem cruel to place a muzzle on a sick or injured pet, but it's important to protect the humans handling and caring for the animal. The most docile, gentle pets in the world can become snappish out of fear or due to pain.

A **collar or harness and leash**.

A pair of **tweezers** for splinter or tick removal.

A **nail trimmer** or clipper.

A pair of **blunt-tipped scissors** to trim hair away from a wound, or to clip out foreign material caught in your pet's fur.

Pre-soaked povidone iodine (Betadine) pads to clean out cuts, wounds or abrasions, and **bottled water**. The wound should be

Story at-a-glance

- Many households don't have a first aid kit for human family members, much less the four-legged variety. And this can be risky, because when faced with a frightening emergency involving the family dog or cat, many people either don't know what to do, or become overwhelmed and unable to assist their sick or injured animal.
- Having a pet first aid kit on hand can take away some of the guesswork and help pet owners stay in control in an emergency situation. It actually takes very little effort to put a kit together that contains the information and tools needed to keep your pet alive and safe until you can reach your vet or an emergency animal hospital.
- There are a number of items you'll want to add to your pet's first aid kit, and one suggestion for the kit itself is a large clear plastic zipper bag that you can see into. This will help you quickly identify the kit and if you follow our recommendations, you'll also have the emergency phone numbers you need right in front of you.

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flushed with water after using the pre-soaked pads.

Saline solution. Regular human contact lens saline drops can be used to flush out dirt, sand or other irritants from your pet's eye. It can also be used to flush away debris from a cut or scrape.

Triple antibiotic ointment to apply to a wound after it has been cleaned with povidone iodine and flushed with water.

Sterile water soluble lubricating jelly. You can apply water soluble lubricating jelly around your pet's eyes if you need to use soap or povidone iodine to clean a wound close to the eyes.

Sterile non-stick pads to cover a wound before bandaging.

Bandage material, either **elastic bandages or gauze** to hold a non-stick pad in place over a wound.

Hydrogen peroxide 3% to induce vomiting, but only if your vet or the Animal Poison Control hotline instructs you to do so. Always call your vet or the hotline if you believe your dog or cat may have ingested a toxic substance. Hydrogen peroxide should not be used to clean a wound, as it is known to actually slow the healing process.

A **clean cotton towel** that can serve multiple purposes, from a pressure bandage, to a blanket, to a sling to lift a larger pet that isn't able to walk.

A **flashlight.** Sometimes a bright light source can help you more readily identify that thorn in your pet's paw or the tiny tick in between her toes.

Other Items You Might Want to Include:

- Cotton balls and swabs
- Ear cleanser
- Benadryl for hypersensitivity reactions
- Bach Rescue Remedy for stress
- Homeopathic Aconitum for shock
- Styptic/clotting powder to stop bleeding from broken toenails
- A thermometer

If you'd prefer not to make your own kit, you can also buy a [ready-made pet first aid kit](#).

Make sure to keep your kit in an easily accessible location and let everyone in the family know where it is. If you're traveling with your pet, it's a good idea to either bring the kit along, or prepare a second kit for the car.

Remember that administering first aid to a sick or injured pet is just the first step in handling the emergency. Always seek immediate veterinary care as soon as possible to give your pet the best chance for a full recovery.

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