



FIRSTAID FOR PETS with Dr. Michael Woodcock

One of the most common questions at THE VET LOUNGE is “*do I really need to bring my pet in for a consultation?*”

Michael and his team of Vet Nurses answer is typically to ask a question or two in return. “*Is the pet in any danger?*” “*How long has the problem been going on?*” “*Have you tried....?*”

Most problems do require veterinary intervention at some stage but there are some easy things that you can do yourself to immediately help your pet if you can't get straight to the vet.

First aid treatment in animals is very similar to humans except the medications taken can cause different side effects depending on the type of animal. **DO NOT use human preparations on animals** unless instructed to do so by your vet – you can end up hurting your pet rather than helping!

Wounds, bleeding and shock can be treated similar to people by elevating the affected limb, bandaging and applying pressure to stop bleeding, warming the animal with blankets and hot water bottles for shock.

Car accidents, fight wounds and injuries all are treated in a similar way. Allergic reactions often require an injection of antihistamines or cortisone by your vet but redness, swelling and inflammation can be treated with cool water, cleaning off the skin surface to remove allergens, and physical restraint to prevent licking the area which will just continue the reaction. Chlorhexidine or betadine watered down can be used on minor skin wounds to disinfect.

As summer approaches, **overheating** is another possibility and immediate cooling with water, ice and fans can reduce the need for veterinary intervention in mild cases. **Do not use wet blankets as this can lock in the heat.**

Ticks, snakes, cane toads and spiders can be toxic to our pets. If found on the pet or if they have been bitten, veterinary care must be sought. In the meantime, keeping the pet calm, cool and immobile will reduce the spread and effect of toxins – this means you **MUST** stay calm too. Salivating pets due to mouthing a toad need copious mouth wiping with cool water and a rag to remove the toxin.

Continuous vomiting and diarrhoea can be signs of a worsening gastrointestinal problem and definitely will need veterinary attention. At first signs of vomit or diarrhoea, the owner can remove all food access for 12-24hrs if the pet is still bright, alert and running around normally. Any lethargy, depression, shaking, or combination with other signs though needs immediate intervention.

Most important is that our pets cannot speak to tell us what is wrong or for how long they have felt sick, so if your basic first aid is not fixing the problem immediately seek veterinary attention – it could be a matter of life or death.

Michael Woodcock

The Vet Lounge