



Emergency Pet Care

What to do in an emergency – an overview:

- **Prevent further injury to your pet or yourself**

This is common sense, and obviously it will depend on the circumstances. If for instance your pet has been hit by a car, you should move it off the road. And be careful - don't risk injury to yourself. Even the most loyal family pet can bite you when it's distressed or in pain.

- **Provide First Aid if necessary**

Sick or injured animals should first be examined by you, and they should be kept warm and dry. The article in this leaflet on *Common Emergencies* will hopefully provide you with the information you need to provide appropriate first aid for your pet. The *First Aid Kit* article will tell you how to prepare in advance to ensure that you have what you need on hand should an emergency arise. We have also prepared guidelines on the care of sick and injured birds and wildlife, and stray dogs and cats.

- **Call for veterinary assistance if needed**

Our phone number **9829 1947** will put you in touch with the help that you need. Emergencies are always given priority, whether you have an appointment or not, but it's important to phone first. We can advise you what to do, and make sure that a vet will be available when you get here.

If we're closed then our after-hours service can still provide you with the help that you need, or refer you to an emergency centre if necessary. The article on our *After-hours Service* explains how it works.

When should I call for emergency after-hours help?

Ultimately this decision is yours, but we would consider it to be an emergency if your pet:

- is having difficulty breathing
- has lost consciousness
- is having sustained (> 5 mins) or repeated seizures
- is bleeding uncontrollably
- has eaten snail bait or another poison
- has been in labour for more than 2 hours without delivering a puppy or kitten
- has any problem that you think could be life-threatening or that is causing him/her significant pain or distress, and it can't wait until we are open.

After Hours Service

We provide an after-hours emergency service should you ever need it. All you need to do is dial our normal phone number: **9829 1947**

When you phone us after-hours, an answering machine will give you the phone number for our paging service. When you phone this number, the operator will ask you to identify yourself by name and phone number. They will also ask for a message and you should give a very brief description of the problem. One of our vets will be paged at home, will usually phone you back within a few minutes, and arrange to meet you at our hospital.

Some additional points to note:

- **The after-hours service is for emergencies only**
- Don't come to the hospital after-hours without phoning first – no one will be there!
- The minimum charge is \$109 (higher after 10pm).
- The paging service operators have no medical training, so just give them a message and wait for us to call you.
- Do not record the pager number for future reference.
Occasionally, all of our vets may be unavailable for some reason, and in this situation, we will have changed our answering machine message to give you an alternate number to phone. It is vital in these situations that you get this alternate number. The operators of our paging service do not know when we are unavailable.
- If for some reason you are unable to contact us after-hours, please phone the *Animal Emergency and Critical Care Service* on **975 88 900**. (See next article).

Our after-hours service is provided to our clients as part of our commitment to providing *high quality health care for family pets*. However, we do this out of what is normally our time off. As our clients, you are welcome to phone us at any time that you need us. But we do request that you don't ask to be put through to our paging service unless it's a genuine emergency, and you need your animal seen by us immediately.

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Animal Emergency & Critical Care Service

We want you to remember that in the majority of cases, we will be available to meet your emergency needs at our own hospital in Ingleburn. However, the *Animal Emergency & Critical Service (AE&CCS)* provides an excellent alternative at other times. You may need to use this service in the following situations:

- some public holidays (eg. Christmas & Boxing Day)
- if your pet needs intensive care throughout the night that we are unable to provide.
- rarely at other times if our own vets are unavailable.

If you would prefer to use the *AE&CCS* instead of contacting us directly, then you are welcome to do that too if you wish.

The *AE&CCS* is an emergency service based in the *Animal Referral Hospital (ARH)* on the Hume Hwy at South Strathfield. At night, you can reach the *AE&CCS* by car in around 30 minutes. The *AE&CCS* provides:

- specialists in emergency medicine & critical care
- vets on the premises 24 hours a day
- support of the *ARH* staff, which includes some of the country's best specialists in surgery, medicine, ophthalmology and diagnostic imaging.

Their consultation fee is fixed no matter how late it is. If your pet needs ongoing hospitalisation then he/she can be left at the *ARH* or brought back to us at Ingleburn. Either way, a full report will be sent back to us and included in your pet's medical records. You can phone them directly on: **975 88 900**.



Their address is 444 Liverpool Rd (Hume Hwy), South Strathfield (corner of Manning Ave).

To get to the Animal Referral Hospital (*AE&CCS*) take the M5, turn left onto King Georges Rd, right into Punchbowl Rd, then left into either Water St or Coronation Pde, then into Dean St and finally Manning Ave. Map references: UBD: 253 G9, Gregory's: 371 D5

Stray Dogs and Cats

If you find a stray dog or cat, then whether it's injured or not, your first step should be to phone the pound. Campbelltown Pound is in Rose St, just off Blaxland Rd and their number is **4628 3044**. Their hours are 9am-3:30pm Monday-Friday and 9am-12noon Saturday. If the pound is closed and it's an emergency, you can phone their emergency service on **9963 1621** or contact the pound's vet directly (Bradbury Vet Hospital). We will help out where we can, but we cannot take in stray cats unless they are injured, and we cannot provide after-hours service to strays.

Sick & Injured Birds & Wildlife



At Ingleburn we provide free care for sick and injured native birds and other wildlife in our office hours. We do this on a volunteer basis in association with *WIRES*, the Wildlife Rescue Service.

All you need to do is bring the animal to us, and give us details of the circumstances in which it was found.

We will provide free medical & surgical care, and then arrange for a foster-carer to look after the animal until it can be released. Euthanasia may be performed if it is deemed necessary on humane grounds.

Please note that we provide this service only during our office hours. We are not able to provide free after-hours service. In these circumstances, you should first try to contact *WIRES* directly on 8977 3333. If they are not available, then you need to care for the animal yourself until we re-open. In most cases, all you need to do is provide the animal with warmth and water. This is best done by using a cardboard box and a small bed lamp (25-40W globe) to provide warmth. Put water in a very shallow dish only. Alternatively, you could take the animal to the *AE&CCS* at Strathfield (see next article) or to the *RSPCA* at Yagoona.

First Aid Kit

The following items should be available if you need them for treating problems at home with your pet(s):



- Gauze swabs,
- Cotton bandages
- Elastoplast bandages
- Betadine or Savlon antiseptic cream
- Aspirin – for pain relief. Dose rate is 10-20mg/kg Cats (and v. small dogs): quarter of a 300mg tablet. Dogs – small: ½ tab, medium: 1 tab, large : 2 tabs Give ONLY A SINGLE DOSE and consult your vet if pain persists. DO NOT use paracetamol (Panadol), ibuprofen, naproxen or any other human pain-reliever
- Ipecac Syrup, Washing Soda or Hydrogen Peroxide
Dose rates to induce vomiting:
 - Ipecac Syrup – 2-6mls
 - Washing Soda – 1-2 granules
DO NOT use washing powder
 - Hydrogen Peroxide (3% only) – 5-10mls
- Activated charcoal tablets (to help absorb poisons)
Dose is 1gm/kg and it works faster if crushed (but you'll never get this much into your pet, so just give as much as they'll take, however they'll take it.)

We have prepared first aid kits containing most of these items, along with dose rates for each of the medications included. They can be purchased from our hospital.

Common Emergencies

This is a partial list of some of the “emergencies” that your pet may encounter. Some are more serious and urgent than others. In virtually all cases, if it happens during our office hours then the first thing you should do is to phone us. If it’s after-hours, then these notes may help you provide first aid and deal with minor problems. These notes provide general advice only and do not replace expert diagnosis and care for serious illnesses. Help is always available for genuine emergencies.

Car Accidents. If your pet is hit by a car, it may sustain a variety of injuries, ranging from very minor to severe and fatal. The first thing you should do is to move it off the road if necessary, remembering to be careful so as to prevent further injury to yourself or your pet. Your pet will probably be in some degree of shock, so warmth and reassurance from you are important. With severe injuries you should always seek immediate help. In other cases, you can do a lot yourself until veterinary care is available. Your pet will probably be breathing fast and its gums will be a bit pale. This is a normal response to stress. It will also be bruised and may have numerous grazes or small cuts. Pain relief can be given at home, and minor wounds can be cared for. See below and *First Aid Kit* for details.

Cuts, Grazes and Lacerations should normally receive first aid at home, and then be checked by a veterinarian later if necessary. They should firstly be cleaned with saline (a mixture of 1 tsp of salt in 1L of warm water). We do not recommend using Dettol.

If they are still bleeding, then pressure should be applied to control the bleeding. This is best done using gauze swabs and a firmly applied bandage. For very large lacerations, or ones that won’t stop bleeding after a few minutes, you should then seek veterinary help. If the bleeding stops, then just leave the bandage on and have the wound checked in office hours. For small cuts and grazes that don’t need veterinary attention, you can apply some antiseptic such as Betadine lotion or a thin smear of Savlon cream. We do not recommend antibiotic powders such as EDP as these often just cake over the wound and hide infections that are developing underneath.

Lameness and suspected Broken Bones

Lameness (limping) will usually not be an emergency, but this will depend on how much pain is involved. Broken bones are a much more serious problem, but even then it is pain relief that is most important initially. X-rays and fracture repairs can normally be delayed until the next day. Fractures where the bone is exposed, or where there’s a lot of pain or other injuries, generally require immediate veterinary care.

Animals with sore legs should generally be rested. If the soreness is in the lower half of the leg (below the knee or elbow) then a padded bandage can help to support the leg and alleviate the pain. A thick gauze or cotton bandage covered with Elastoplast is ideal. Pain relieving drugs are also important. See *First Aid Kit* for doses.

Poisoning.

Snail baits are highly toxic to dogs and cats. If you even *suspect* that your pet has eaten snail-bait then you should induce vomiting and later give *activated charcoal* (see *First Aid Kit*).



If you *know* that your pet has eaten snail bait, or if they’re showing signs such as salivating, tremors and convulsions, then you should seek immediate veterinary help.

Note: **Prevention** is better than cure. Only lay baits in areas where your pets can’t get to them, and store the boxes in a safe place. By all means choose snail baits with bittering agents and pet deterrents, but don’t depend on this – many pets still die from these. *Baysol* is probably safer to use than *Defender*. It’s still potentially fatal, but at least there is an antidote available.

Rodenticides (rat and mouse baits) are also toxic. Most affect the ability of the blood to clot. Signs of disease may not be seen for several days or weeks after the poisoning has occurred, and antidotes are usually available. Initial treatment for rat-bait poisoning is to induce vomiting (see *First Aid*) and then give *activated charcoal* to help absorb any residual poison. If you know that your pet has eaten rat-bait and you can’t get them to vomit, you should seek veterinary help. If they do vomit and show no signs of illness, then a trip to the vet within 24 hours is still advised, so that an antidote can be prescribed. Don’t forget to bring the packet with you so that we can identify the type of bait. This has a big effect on the dose of antidote used.



Bee Stings are common in puppies and in other dogs who like to snap at flies and bees. They usually occur on the face and result in dramatic swelling, particular of the muzzle and around the eyes. Your dog may also develop “hives” over most of its body. If you can find the sting, you should remove it. In most cases, the swelling will settle down itself, but we can assist this by the use of antihistamines and anti-inflammatory drugs. It’s an emergency if the swelling spreads to the throat and starts to cause difficulty breathing.



Spider Bites are generally not as dangerous to dogs and cats as they are to people. In most cases even venomous spiders (eg. Red-backs) will cause only pain and swelling at the site of the bite. Pain relief and antibiotics can help. Anti-venoms are available for severe cases where there is vomiting or muscle paralysis.



Snake Bites can be a much more serious problem. You should identify the snake if at all possible (remember that it’s illegal to kill them though). If you know your pet’s been bitten by a venomous snake such as a brown snake, red-bellied black snake or tiger snake, then you need immediate veterinary help.

If you’ve seen the snake but aren’t sure if your pet’s been bitten, then look for signs such as collapse, difficulty breathing, weakness, tremors and convulsions, vomiting, loss of balance and dilated pupils. Your pet should be rested and if you know that it’s been bitten on the leg, then you should apply a pressure bandage.

Paralysis Ticks are not common around Ingleburn. They will usually be found only if your pet has been on a coastal holiday with you. The paralysis tick burrows its head into the skin, but the body is always outside, and is a steely blue/grey colour. A tick may be only 1-2mm in size when it first attaches, but grows as it feeds and will usually be 3-5mm or more in size by the time it causes signs of illness. The first signs are weakness in the hind legs, and perhaps a change in your pet's breathing or its voice/bark. If you find a tick, you can spray it with Frontline, but don't pull it out. You should seek veterinary advice if your pet shows signs of paralysis.

Whelping (giving birth). If your pet is pregnant, then we hope that before the pups/kittens are due, you will have brought her in for a checkup, and found out all you need to know about caring for her during and after the pregnancy. If you haven't done this, then the main things you need to know are:

- pregnancy usually lasts for about 9 weeks
- labour can normally last for up to 2 hours for each puppy/kitten. Any longer may indicate a problem.
- Lots of black or dark green/brown liquid is normal
- The mother should quickly remove the membranes and lick the puppy/kitten's face to stimulate breathing. If she doesn't, then you may need to do this yourself (but not with your tongue!)

Abscesses are most common in cats after a fight with another cat. They usually present as a painful lump just below the skin consisting of swollen tissue as well as pus. If the abscess has burst, you may see the pus, or you may just notice the wound after your cat/dog has licked it clean. Abscesses need to be drained (to get the pus out) and treated with antibiotics. After-hours you can treat them temporarily by cleaning up the wound with saline (a mixture of 1 tsp of salt in 1L of warm water). Gentle massage can help to expel the pus. But be careful not to get bitten or scratched! If the abscess has not yet burst then you should look for any wounds or scabs and soak them to remove them. This may allow the pus to escape.

Bones caught in the mouth. This can cause a lot of stress to your dog who will usually salivate and paw at its mouth. But it's generally easily fixed. The bone will usually be lodged over the upper premolar teeth on one side, or across the roof of the mouth. Grab the bone with your fingers or a blunt-nosed pair of pliers and pull it out. If possible, check for cuts on the gums and if any are found, then a trip to the vet the next day and antibiotics will prevent infection. If you can't get it out and your dog is distressed then you need veterinary help.

Fishing Hooks are more difficult to remove. Never try to pull the hook back out the way it went in. The barb on the hook will tear the flesh and cause a lot of pain. Instead, cut the shaft (with diagonal cutting pliers or similar) and then push the point with the barb through the other side. You may or may not be able to do this yourself. A trip to the vet later for a checkup and antibiotics is always a good idea in any case.

Seizures or fits are often caused by epilepsy (even if your pet had no previous signs of epilepsy). The most important thing is to keep your pet calm, and stop them from hurting themselves as they are fitting. If the fit stops, then a trip to the vet the next day is essential to try to identify the cause. If it doesn't stop, if your pet has repeated seizures, or if you suspect poisoning, then immediate veterinary help is needed.

Vomiting and Diarrhoea can be caused by a huge variety of problems. But initial treatment at home should be the same regardless. The first thing to do is take away all access to food for at least 24 hours. Water should be given frequently - but only in very small quantities (a few laps at a time) if your pet is vomiting. If they are unable to keep the water down, then stop that for at least 2 hours as well - and then try again. If the vomiting is persistent or severe, or if it's accompanied by other signs of illness, then you may need immediate veterinary help. Otherwise, it can probably wait until a consultation the next day. Dogs and cats can get bouts of mild gastroenteritis just like we can.

Constipation is usually not an emergency and can be examined by a vet during a normal consultation. There are 2 exceptions:

- 1) They are actually trying to pass urine (*wee* not *poo*). See *Difficulty Urinating* next.
- 2) They are in a lot of pain/discomfort with the straining. This is often seen in small puppies where poo has dried in the hairs around the anus (bottom) and the next time they try to go to the toilet; the anal passage has been blocked. This can be fixed by washing or cutting the hair from around the area.

Difficulty Urinating can be a much more serious problem. In male cats, the penis can be blocked completely by a "plug" of crystals that have formed in the bladder. If your cat is straining and passing small amounts of urine then this can probably wait until normal consulting hours, even if the urine is bloody. But if he's unable to pass urine at all for a period of 8-12 hours or more, then he needs immediate treatment. This urgent problem is unlikely in dogs or female cats.

Blood in the Urine or faeces is usually not an emergency unless the bleeding is persistent or occurs in large amounts, or your pet is showing other signs of illness as well. Remember too that a little bit of blood mixed with urine can look much worse than it really is. But an appointment should be made as soon as possible to have this checked.

Heat Stress is usually seen on very hot days particularly in older or overweight animals, or those that have been locked in a car. The symptoms are severe persistent panting and in serious cases your pet may be flat on its side and unable to stand. If you suspect heat stress you should move your pet to a cooler location and/or cool it with water. But be careful, small animals in particular can lose body heat very quickly if you leave them wet. Severe heat stress can be fatal and should always be treated by a vet.