

Pet First-Aid Month Stresses Preparedness

The month of April is dedicated to helping dog owners prepare for emergency situations.

Posted: April 4, 2009, 5 a.m. EDT

To celebrate National Pet First-Aid Awareness Month in April, pet owners are urged to be prepared to handle emergency situations, such as a car accident or poisoning.

To help pet owners prepare in advance, Dr. Mark Stickney, director of general surgery services at Texas A&M University's College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, offers the following tips: Build a relationship with your pet's veterinarian. Find out if the vet has an after-hour emergency service, and if not, who they recommend calling in case of an emergency.

As the warmer months approach, more pets will be affected by snake bites. Dogs tend to get bitten on their noses, faces, and front legs. In cases of poisoning or trauma, contact your veterinarian.

If an animal has been hit by a car or bike and is injured or bleeding, the first thing to do is put pressure on the area to slow the blood flow. Hurt dogs tend to bite, so having a muzzle is important. (Find out how to transport an injured dog >>)

Less severe incidences such as minor cuts and scrapes are fairly common and can be handled much like treating a person. Avoid antibiotic cream anywhere a pet can lick it off.

In addition, the American Red Cross advises pet owners to keep the following first-aid supplies on hand: gauze pads, gauze roll/bandages, roll of cloth, thermometer, tweezers, hydrogen peroxide, antibiotic ointment, Q-tips, instant cold pack, rags/rubber tubing for tourniquet, and first-aid book.

Other suggested items include paperwork, including the pet's health record, medications, local and national poison control numbers, regular veterinary clinic hours and telephone numbers, and emergency clinic hours and telephone number.

Do you know how to respond to an emergency? Take a quiz to find out!