

# GENERAL FIRST AID AND NURSING OF SICK ANIMALS

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First aid is a subject based on the principles of medicine and surgery and the main purpose is to alleviate unnecessary pain and suffering. To carry out this function, little knowledge of how to make an animal feel comfortable is essential. In an emergency, when no veterinarian is immediately available to give direction, even a lay person or the animal care taker has the right to administer first aid treatment to animals by whatever means available, but only as an interim measure, designed to preserve life and alleviate suffering until a veterinarian is called upon to attend the animal.

## AIMS AND RULES OF FIRST AIDS

First aid treatment is based on three aims and four rules AIMS

- i) To preserve life
- ii) To prevent suffering
- iii) To prevent the situation deteriorating

## THE FOUR RULES ARE

- i) Don't panic
- ii) Maintain the airway
- iii) Control the hemorrhage
- iv) Contact the veterinarian as soon as possible, never forget these rules when dealing with emergency case. Avoid disturbances due to sound, light and vibrations. Provide soft bedding to avoid bed sources.

## An emergency can be classified as one of three types

- i) Life threatening emergencies requiring immediate action
- ii) Emergencies requiring immediate attention but not life threatening
- iii) Minor emergencies

## APPROACHING THE INJURED ANIMAL

**Animals in emergency can be classified into two groups.**

- i) Ambulatory (able to walk)

These type of animals may be allowed to walk and little encouragement should be used to guide the animal to the transport vehicle.

- ii) Non-Ambulatory

These animals need boxes and baskets which should be escape proof and capable of providing ventilation and the injured ones are carried to the transport vehicle. When the first aider sees an unconscious animal the first thing that must be done is to determine whether or not the animal is alive.

1. Feel the pulse
2. Note the state of respiration
3. Look at the eyes. Note whether they are bright or dull
4. Examine the head for signs of wound and mouth for colour, cold ness, frothing or dullness
5. Examine the limbs which in case of shock will be relaxed, in cases of fits will be jerking and in certain forms of poisoning will be rigid

Death is determined by the absence of heart beat, absence of respiratory movement, coldness of the body and eyes become dull and lusterless. Following are certain conditions that require:

## FIRST AID

- a) Haemorrhage
- b) Burns and scalds
- c) Epistaxis (Bleeding from nose)
- d) Heat stroke (Heat prostration)
- e) Wasp and Bee sting
- f) Snake bite
- g) Fracture of bones
- h) Wounds
- i) Suffocation
- j) Drowning
- k) Electric shock



**1. Hemorrhage (Bleeding)** Bleeding arising from capillaries can be controlled by applying pressure bandage over the area. A tourniquet with rubber bands may be applied. Firm pressure may help to reduce bleeding. Tincture Iodine, Tincture benzoin may be used to control bleeding from capillaries. These coagulate the blood proteins and thus hastens blood clotting.

**2. Burns and Scalds** Burns may involve larger or smaller skin surface. The burnt area should be flushed with cold normal saline or water. Soothing and protective preparations may be used as burn dressings.

**3. Epistaxis (Bleeding from nose)** Rest is very important. The animal should be kept in a cool place. Ice pack, ice water or cold water irrigation should be applied. If bleeding persists haemostatic drugs should be injected under the supervision of a veterinarian.

**4. Heatstroke** Over exercise in hot weather, environmental heat, dehydration, limited water supply are the factors responsible for heat stroke. The animal should be placed in a cool, dark room and cold compressors should be applied to the head and neck. Ice pack is very useful if available.

**5. Wasp and Bee Sting** Wasp and Bee sting produce urticarial swellings on the skin. Animals show signs of pain and irritation. Formic acid is deposited on the skin and this produce the irritation. Attempts should be made to remove the sting and the area washed with washing soda (Three teaspoon full in 500 ml water)

**6. Snake Bite** Snake possesses four types of venom; these are cytotoxin, neurotoxin, hemolysin and anticlotting factor. A flat tourniquet should be applied above the bitten area. The bitten area may be incised to drain out venom as far as possible and animal brought under the treatment of veterinarian.

**7. Fracture of Bones** A breach in the continuity of the bone is known as fracture. Restriction of movement is an important aspect in the management of fracture. Immobilization of the part with splint and bandages and analgesic to relieve pain is necessary.

**8. Wound** It may be closed wound or open wound. At first, the offending agents (e.g.) nails, hook, glass wire should be removed. The open wound should be cleaned with normal saline and dressed with antiseptic or antibiotic lotion or ointment and bandaged with sterile gauze and cotton. Bandage should never be applied tight. Cold water should be applied for a closed wound. For this purpose, ice, ice water or cold water may be used.

**9. Suffocation** This arise from inhalation of irrespirable gases. The first thing is to remove the animal from the point of danger and switched over to a place where there is plentiful supply of fresh air. If necessary, artificial respiration should be applied.

**10. Drowning** Animals area good swimmers, unless a sheep in full fleece. Most animals succumb to drowning because of the on set of exhaustion. The animal that has drowned should be placed on right side, with the neck and head extended and tongue pulled out and then held up by the hind legs for a few seconds to drain water from the respiratory passage incase of small animals.

**11. Electric Shock** This is caused by coming in to contact with electric cables. Electricity must be cut off before handling the animal otherwise the first aider will also get shocked. The animal may be pushed away from the wire with a piece of wood (non-conductor of electricity). If rubber gloves and boots are not available, it is better for the operator to stand on a piece of wood and burns treated as early as possible.

**12. Parturition Symptoms** Most animals will present offspring normally, but with symptoms of dystocia one should observe whether the head and forelimbs are seen outside. If so, it may take a reasonable time for delivering the lamb. If after a long time, the ewe is not able to expel the lamb or fetus care should be taken to expell it.

As also in the case of prolapse of uterus, aversion of vagina and in the case of retained placenta etc. care should be taken to treat it. This is more important as secondary infection due to contamination of the affected part could be avoided till veterinarian takes charge to render necessary treatment, surgery etc.

#### **ADDITIONAL NOTES:**

