

## Handling Emergencies

### Introduction

Emergencies can be a scary part of working in an animal clinic – panicked owner, injured pets and people running in every direction. The most important rule for any emergency is:

Stay calm. Don't panic. Take control.

A distraught owner is in no position to take control, so you have to. They will be looking to you to know what to do. By remaining calm and taking assertive, predetermined steps to handle the emergency you will calm the owner.

### In-Clinic Emergencies

Escort the patient and the owner out of the reception area and into the emergency area. The technicians will begin to assess the pet and notify the doctor of the emergency.

Escort the owner into a room. Get the client's name and a brief description of what happened. Pull the chart and give it to the doctor.

Offer the client water or a cup of coffee. Begin to have the client fill out the appropriate paperwork. Advise the owner that the doctor will be up momentarily to give a progress report.

Note: If you are not sure if the situation is an emergency, don't guess! Alert a technician by calling over the loud speaker "Technician to the front STAT!" They can assess the patient and bring it into the back for treatment.

### Over-the-Phone Emergencies

Step one is to identify the problem. Get the caller's name and phone number. Even if you do not think it is a true emergency, arrange to have the client bring the pet to the clinic as soon as possible. If it is an emergency to the client, it deserves our immediate attention. If a doctor has an open appointment at that time schedule the potential emergency for that time. If the client feels that this is an emergency, then it is. Tell him to come in immediately. The doctor can then evaluate the pet's condition and decide whether treatment should be immediate or can wait for a time.

Always recommend extreme caution in handling injured pets. Injured animals tend to bite, and the owners may want to muzzle the pet before trying to move it. They can use a stocking or scarf for this purpose. Pets that have been hit by a car should be moved on a flat surface if possible to avoid further trauma.

### Common Small-Animal Emergencies

An emergency is any situation where the pet seems in severe distress or discomfort.

Hit by car or any other major trauma to the body, head or limbs

A dog or cat in labor for more than one hour without offspring being born

Severe vomiting or diarrhea (vomiting more than 6 times in 24 hours or diarrhea with blood, or a young animal)

Pet straining to urinate

Uncontrolled bleeding

Heat stroke

Severe dog or cat fight wounds

Breathing difficulty: pet's tongue and gums turning blue

Bloat

Prolapsed eye

Seizure

### Basic First Aid Advice for Clients

Muzzle the pet. Although a dog might never bite in normal circumstances, extreme pain can cause it to bite at almost anything. In the cases of hemorrhage and uncontrolled bleeding, apply direct pressure or a pressure bandage at the site of the bleeding. Apply a clean, moist towel or rag on any wound, especially a prolapsed eye. If there is a possibility of a back injury or a fracture advise the client to try to transport the pet on a flat surface.

#### Application Exercises:

If a client calls in a panic because they have an emergency 'lump' on the pet's back, what is the proper course?

Which animals that have been hit by a car may potentially bite?

Do frantic rushing about and yells to coworkers make a client feel we are in control of an emergency? What does?