

# 1. Basics of Pet Health Care

**Pets are living things, and they are vulnerable to several diseases and conditions that are common among humans also.**

Domestic animals are known to suffer from diseases such as arthritis, cancer, diabetes and epilepsy.

A qualified veterinary surgeon will be able to diagnose any problems and can prescribe the right medicine. Veterinary services also include surgical intervention and fixing broken or fractured bones. It is extremely important for pet owners to administer the prescribed dosage and follow the label instructions carefully. Sometimes, pets may have adverse reactions to certain medications – similar to humans. In these cases, pet owners must contact their veterinary clinic or an emergency after hours clinic.

Although, it is not possible to treat all chronic health conditions, most can be managed over long term. In most cases, veterinary clinics keep medicine in stock and pet owners can go home with the medication.

In addition to medical attention, veterinary clinics also provide vaccinations, which are not only necessary for the health and well-being for the pet, but also a requirement for all pet owners. Veterinary treatment may also involve diagnostic procedures such as radiography and laboratory testing.

Emergency life-saving techniques are useful if a pet falls ill suddenly, is involved in an accident or hurts itself while playing at home.

**The general functions of a veterinary clinic can be summarized as follows:**

1. Provision of inoculations
2. Dressing wounds
3. Setting fractures
4. Performing dental work and surgery
5. Prescribing medication and treatment
6. Providing euthanasia services
7. Providing general advice and suggestions regarding pet care
8. Canine/feline vet practices (for the treatment and care of dogs and cats)
9. Exotic companion vet services (for smaller mammals such as ferrets, mice, rats and other small pets)
10. Avian veterinary practice (for treatment of birds)
11. Equine vet practices (for the treatment of horses)

Other important veterinary services include treatment of eyes and eye-related ailments (vet ophthalmologist), nutrition specialist, dermatologist, vet anesthetist, toxicologist (a professional responsible for treating animals/birds that have consumed or been exposed to poisons), pathologist, radiologist and specialists in preventative medicine.

In addition, animal psychologists and behavioral experts help analyze and diagnose emotional and psychological issues relating to pets.

## **FACT**

Approximately 44% of all households in the United States have a dog, and 35% have a cat. (Source: American Pet Products Association 2015-2016). Source: [www.aspca.org](http://www.aspca.org)

## 2. How to Register Pet with the City and Obtain Animal licenses.

**Once a pet is adopted, it will be necessary to obtain a license. This will require registering the pet with the city. In order to do this, proof of updated vaccinations will be necessary.**

This will help streamline access to quality healthcare and medication for your pet.

Registering a pet is a fairly simple procedure. First, it is important that the animal is up-to-date on all of its vaccines. Next, a pet registration form must be filled out and submitted to the city clerk's office along with all of the supporting documents. If the city has a website, the pet registration forms can most likely be downloaded. Pet owners should receive dog tags with a license number once registration is complete. Keep in mind that if animals are relocated to another city, it may be required to register all pets in the new city.

## 3. Tips on How to Make Veterinary Clinic Visits Less Stressful for Your Pet

**It's extremely important to take your pet to the vet clinic regularly for vaccinations, check-ups, and treatment.**

However, vet clinics are associated with strange sights, smells and sounds and pets tend to experience greater levels of nervousness during vet visits. It's quite similar to human beings (many of us tend to experience nervousness at the prospect of medical examinations or procedures).

### **For example**

Dogs often tend to feel nervous towards vet visits due to stress and fear.

**The following useful tips will help pet owners make vet visits less stressful for their pets.**

1. Try to give your pet some exercise before taking it to the vet. This will help minimize the likelihood of urination due to stress. The pet is more likely to be calmer and more docile. Nervous pets will tend to urinate or defecate due to nervousness and stress.
2. Pet owners may wish to use a carrier to protect their pets from other fractious animals in the clinic.
3. A favorite toy can be calming for the pet.
4. Staying close and soothing the animal during a vet visit can help prevent further anxiety and can help control fears.
5. If a dog or cat refuses to enter the clinic, trying walking by the entrance a few times, rather than going into the vet against the animals will.
6. Keep animals on a leash at all times. Even if a pet happens is extremely friendly, other animals may not be. Using a leash helps keep animals safe and under control.
7. It is always a good idea for pet owners to be present during vet visits. Some procedures are longer or overnight and prohibit owners from sticking around. However, it is a good idea to stick around whenever possible.

8. If your pet is aggressive, please make it a point to inform the vet beforehand. Although vets and their assistants are trained to calm down an aggressive dog or cat, it is always better to let them know in advance. Sometimes technicians can help walk the animal into the clinic, or can be prepared for unexpected bites. If necessary, please carry along a protective muzzle.
9. Pet owners should provide full information pertaining to the pet's appetite, thirst, bowel movements, energy level (weakness), sleeping habits, coughing, vomiting and so on. A complete history can help the vet prescribe the right medication.
10. Also remember to provide accurate information regarding any current medication or treatment. It's important to provide the correct name of the drug or ointment. Dates and times can also prove to be extremely useful. For example, if your pet suffers from seizures, it helps to note down the date and time.
11. For maximum value from the vet visit, pet owners may wish to be completely honest with the facts. If your pet had fallen down the stairs or swallowed paper clips or toilet cleaner, please be upfront with your vet and rise above any embarrassment or awkwardness that you may feel.
12. If the pet owner is unable to understand the advice of the vet, they should ensure that they clarify their doubts. Wrong interpretation or lack of comprehension may result in incorrect treatment and medication. Sometimes, vets may speak in medical jargon which may not be clear. It's very important for pet owners to clearly understand the words of the vet – do not feel embarrassed to ask questions and clarify doubts.
13. Always ensure that you get an estimate of the cost associated with treatment. It's a good idea for pet owners to consider investing in pet insurance policies (pet insurance is explained in the next section).
14. Pet owners should have an idea of the next step. If your pet is declared completely normal, you may wish to come away with a plan to come for the next annual check-up. Similarly, if your pet has been diagnosed with cough and has been prescribed treatment, ensure that you return for a check-up the following week.

## 4. How Pet Insurance Works

### **Pet insurance is comparable to purchasing medical insurance.**

Responsible pet owners like to ensure that they provide their pets with the best affordable. Pets are vulnerable to accidents, injuries and sudden illnesses. The costs of pet treatment, care and medication can pile on. Pet insurance is a good investment because it allows pet owners to afford quality treatment.

Pet insurance allows owners to afford quality treatment for their pets without having to worry about the financial implications. It is important to become familiar with the terms of the insurance as some policies.

Pet owners can get more competitive pricing if they invest in pet insurance while the pet is young and healthy. The principles of buying pet insurance are similar to buying insurance for humans.

### **Pet insurance policies offered in the United States usually incorporate the following features:**

Breed-specific conditions

Cancer treatment

Diagnostic testing and imaging (e.g. X-ray, Ultrasound, MRI)

Surgery, hospitalization, and nursing care

Alternative therapies and rehabilitation  
ER and specialist care  
Veterinary exam fees  
Prescription drug coverage (optional)

## 5. Emergency Preparedness for Pet First Aid

**Every pet owner must be aware of the importance of emergency first aid treatment.**

There are different types of emergencies that may arise at home, and pet owners must act quickly and effectively in order to bring the situation under control.

Acquiring the right knowledge, skills, and tools will help minimize the stress and panic that pet owners experience in emergency situations.

Acting quickly and effectively can mean the difference between temporary and permanent disability or even life and death. A significant number of pets can be saved if owners can implement first aid procedures prior to taking their animals to a veterinary clinic. Pet first aid refers to the immediate medical attention a pet is given in the event of an accident, injury or illness. Prompt first aid and emergency preparedness helps prevent many problems from worsening until the pet can be referred to a veterinary clinic.

By minimizing the likelihood of further complication or infection, providing efficient first aid may help reduce discomfort for the pet and can reduce stress for pet owners.

Sometimes, we may have only a few important moments to spare. Pet first aid training and timely intervention can help pet owners save the lives of their beloved pets. Pet first aid is similar and the medical first aid administered to humans are very similar. The only points of differentiation lie in anatomy, communication and size. Every pet owner must make it a point to have a pet first aid kit at home.

## 6. Pet First Aid Kit

**Read on for a comprehensive list of equipment and tools that you must include in the pet first aid kit:**

A pet first aid book: There are a number of books on pet first aid available in bookshops as well as in online stores like Amazon. Keep one good book handy in the first aid kit.

A list of important, emergency phone numbers: The list should include the phone number of the regular vet, the vet clinic closest to home (in case this is not your regular vet) and a poison-control center (for emergency ingestion of toxins). Preferably, pet owners should consider placing the list of phone numbers in a waterproof cover.

Copies of important medical records, vaccination status, current photo and registration documents relating to your pet. Keep these in a waterproof packet.

A spare nylon leash: This is so that pet owners are not obliged to waste valuable time looking for a leash in case they have to rush their pet to the clinic.

Self-clinging bandage (also known as 'elastic cling bandage'): Self-clinging bandage does not stick to fur so it is easier to remove. Special self-cling bandages are available at pet stores both offline and online.

A muzzle or strips of cloth to prevent your pet from licking off medicine or ointment. However, please remember that a muzzle should not be used if the pet is vomiting or coughing or experiencing difficulty in breathing.

Hypoallergenic latex gloves for better protection for your hands.

Gauze sponges in a variety of sizes (also known as gauze pads): Gauze sponges are bleached, white cloth pieces that are used to dress wounds. Gauze sponges are manufactured to specific thread counts and they help absorb fluids and blood from the wound. They also help protect the wound from germs, bacteria, and dirt.

Medical adhesive non-allergenic tape: Pet owners may wish to consider buying medical adhesive tape to bind the gauze bandage or splints in place.

Non-adherent sterile pads: These are specially designed medical pads that do not have fibers that stick to the wound. They are made of soft material that allows air to circulate and the wound to breathe. They are easy to cut into different shapes.

Antiseptic wipes, lotion, spray or powder: Consider storing at least 10 rolls of benzalkonium chloride wipes.

Tensor bandages are used to provide elastic support to strained or sprained limbs. They are secured with the help of small, toothed clips.

One pair of blunt/sharp, stainless steel scissors: These scissors are specially designed with blunt and sharp blades to help cut away adhesive tape or bandage without puncturing the skin or fur.

At least one abdominal sterile pad: Abdominal sterile pads are made of a soft, non-woven material that absorbs excess blood to prevent pooling. They are useful for their intensive adhesive properties.

One triangular bandage with sewn edges: Triangular bandages are also called 'cravats' and are useful for use on large wounds. Triangular bandages help to stop bleeding and can also be used as a sling. Triangular bandages can also be used as wrapping for head wounds and can be wrapped on the top of the head.

One emergency space blanket: Space blankets are made of heat reflective thin plastic sheeting useful for treating or preventing hypothermia because the ultrainsulated foil retains body heat. Space blankets are especially useful for protecting your pet against wind and rain in bad weather. Pet owners can buy space blankets from stores that sell camping equipment.

1 box of assorted bandages: Having a ready box of assorted bandages is helpful in selecting the right type of bandage for different types of wounds. The boxes usually come in a range of 30 to 50 different bandages.

1 pair of stainless steel tweezers: Tweezers used for first aid purposes are usually about 3 inches in length and are used for extracting foreign objects such as thorns in your pet's foot or a bone stuck in his throat. Choose tweezers that offer a good grip.

1 magnifying glass: This is especially useful in examining wounds or injuries that are too small for the naked eye.

A water-based sterile lubricant: This is a sterile, water-soluble jelly that spreads easily and helps moisten the skin.

1 bottle of 10 ml saline solution: Saline solution is typically used to clear irritated nasal passages caused due to allergies and colds. Saline solutions work by rinsing and moisturizing the nostrils and minimizing irritation. Saline solutions are also used for

1 bottle of 3% hydrogen peroxide solution: Hydrogen peroxide is often used for treatment of tumors and cancers in pets. One part hydrogen peroxide is mixed with three parts water and fed by syringe to the pet.

However, this form of therapy should only be given under medical advice from the vet.

Wooden tongue depressors

1 (instant and self-activating) hot and cold pack: Hot and cold packs are very useful for use after surgery. They are also useful for use on swellings and bruising.

The use of hot and cold packs is explained in further detail.

1 digital thermometer for checking the temperature

1 mini flashlight with extra batteries

1 pouch of buffered aspirin: Buffered aspirin refers to aspirin that has been coated with a substance in order to neutralize acid. Buffered aspirin is given to dogs and is known to reduce pain, inflammation, and lameness.

It also helps promote mobility. Buffered aspirin is especially recommended for relief from arthritic pain, surgical discomfort or joint disease.

Petroleum jelly

Antibiotic ointment for topical application

1 pair of needle nose pliers

Whistle

Rubbing alcohol: The use of rubbing alcohol is on the rise in the pet care field. Rubbing alcohol can be rubbed onto the area where the pet owner is able to spot a tick. Once the tick loosens its hold and is plucked off, you can apply some rubbing alcohol to the area.

Please ensure that the dog is muzzled and does not lick off the alcohol. Rubbing alcohol is considered significantly more effective compared to 90% alcohol.

Insect sting stop pads

Styptic powder: This helps put an end to bleeding paws or nails. However, styptic powder is known to give an initial sting so please hold your pet before you apply the powder to the bleeding area.

Epsom salts: Pet owners can soak their pets' paws in Epsom salts dissolved in warm water. This helps relieve dryness and itchiness. Soaking a pet's paws in Epsom salted warm water also helps loosen up and eventually expel splinters.

Hydrocortisone cream: If your dog suffers from dryness or itchiness, then you may use hydrocortisone cream to relieve the irritation. It can also be used in small quantities for allergies or infection. Please ensure that you use a muzzle on your dog so that it does not lick the cream off. While hydrocortisone cream is helpful in reducing symptoms, it may not be helpful in addressing the root cause.

Cotton tipped swabs: Using cotton-tipped swabs are a gentle way of cleaning the crevices of your pet's face.

They can also be used to apply ointments for minor cuts and scrapes. They are also useful for wiping away discharge from the eye area after sleep. Pet owners can also use cotton-tipped swabs to wipe the area under the nails and between the paws. You can also use cotton swabs to clean the outside of the ear.

Safety razor or grooming clippers

Eye dropper or baby dose syringe

A small plastic card (such as an old credit card) to scrape away stingers

Clean cloth

## 7. Hot and Cold Pack Therapy Dogs

**Hot and cold packs are particularly useful for pets when they are undergoing physiotherapy, recovering from injury or in the aftermath of surgery.**

Hot and cold pack treatments help a pet parent to provide hands-on assistance to their pets. This form of therapy (coupled with regular professional treatment) is known to help a pet attain full mobility without pain.

These simple treatments help make your pet more comfortable as well as speed up the rate of recovery.

Please note that if you notice that your pet is in extreme pain or does not want to participate in the treatment, it's best to consult your vet. It's a good idea to keep the vet informed of any home first aid treatments that you plan to administer.

### Hot Packs or Heat Therapy

**Heat therapy can help reduce painful muscle spasms, improve nerve conduction (and thereby reduce numbness) as well as improve the elasticity of fibrous tissues.**

Similarly, heat therapy also helps improve blood vessel dilation and also helps lower blood pressure. It can be especially beneficial to apply a hot pack before a physiotherapy session because it helps your pet relax.

Pet owners should consider applying warmth to an injured limb or stiff joint by wrapping the heat pack in a towel or cloth.

Please ensure that the pack is not too hot by touching the skin/fur area. You should ideally apply the hot pack for about 10 to 15 minutes. Take care to avoid burns.

If you wish to make your own hot pack, you can heat a wet towel in the microwave (avoid making it too hot or alternatively, you can dip a towel in warm water).

### Cold Pack or Ice Therapy

**Pet owners may use traditional cold packs or frozen packets of peas or vegetables as ice packs.**

Alternately, cold packs can be made by mixing one part rubbing alcohol with three parts of water and then freezing the mixture.

It's important to bear in mind that commercial frozen packs (such as peas and vegetables) are less effective than medical cold packs because they warm up very quickly when removed from the freezer. They also lack the ability to penetrate soft tissue that is located deeper down.

Cold pack therapy (also referred to as cryotherapy) is known to reduce inflammation, swelling and muscle spasms. It is also effective for reducing pain.

If the pet owner happens to be using an ice pack on a tender area, please ensure that you place a cloth or towel between the ice pack and the skin. If the ice pack is for use on incisions after surgery, owners may wish to first apply an ointment containing vitamin A and D or alternately a sterile gauze pad. The precaution helps minimize the chance of infection originating from the dampness of the ice pack.

Veterinarians recommend ice pack therapy for certain soft tissue injuries and conditions including osteoarthritis (in certain cases, the application of cold packs can sometimes interrupt the healing process so please ensure that you consult your vet before commencing with home treatment). Certain freezer packs may not be suitable because they are unable to mold themselves to the contours of your pet's body.

Certain packs also contain chemicals that may prove to be harmful to pets if they are ingested. In this sense, homemade ice packs tend to be safer for pets.

The most important property of ice that makes it an extremely good component in pain treatment is that ice can absorb heat effectively. For maximum efficacy, the ice pack should be applied to the entire area of inflammation. For example, for older dogs, ice can be applied to the front, back and insides of the knee joint.

If the dog's coat is very thick, then it will take longer for the ice pack to take effect. Ice packs should ideally be applied for a period of 20 minutes. Pet owners should examine the skin/fur every 5 minutes. However, a slight redness or irritation is common upon application of ice pack therapy.

### **\*\*\*Assignment\*\*\***

**Locate a 24 hr emergency vet closest to your home and list their information.**

**Describe what kind of plan you would have if your dog were to become injured.**

**Think of a scenario and explain in 3 paragraphs what you would do.**

## **Module summary**

Pet emergencies can be defined as critical crises caused by an accidents, injuries or illness that require immediate medical intervention. By preparing a comprehensive and complete pet first aid kit, owners may be able to buy that extra critical time before animal can receive professional medical attention. Bear in mind that understanding pet first aid is not a replacement for veterinary care. However, it helps minimize the likelihood of permanent disability and death. First aid and emergency skills help owners recognize and to provide immediate attention for heart attacks, falls, slips, accidents, electric shocks or ingestion of toxins. A well prepared first aid kit is a crucial component in emergency preparedness in the event of sudden illness or accidents. Pet owners should consider investing time and effort into having a first aid kit ready so that they are able to save the lives of their furry friends. The training and knowledge helps pet owners to keep their beloved pets as safe and secure as possible.