

Vet's Corner – Emergency First Aid

When faced with the need for emergency care of an injured greyhound, the following list of actions should be undertaken, in the order given:

- Control of bleeding
- Prevention of infection
- Stabilization of fractures
- Minimize swelling
- Pain relief

Control of bleeding

This can be achieved by either finger pressure over a single source of bleeding or a double thickness of cotton wool over the bleeding site held in place with a firm bandage. If nothing else is available use a piece of cloth (towel, handkerchief, singlet) held in place with string, cord or tape. Once a dressing has been applied it should not be disturbed for at least one hour to allow blood to clot and vessels to seal.

Prevention of infection is desirable

Even though it is unlikely that an owner will have antibiotics on hand, disinfection of wounds with a safe, reliable antiseptic is feasible, e.g., Betadine diluted 1:10 with clean water. If possible, dressings should be soaked in this solution before being applied to the wound. Alternatively, the antiseptic solution can be poured liberally over the dressing once applied.

Stabilization of fractures

This is only feasible for lower limb and tail injuries. Two or three full thicknesses of cotton wool wrapped around the area and held in place with a firm bandage will supply useful support to most injuries. If further support is needed then makeshift splints using ice block sticks, rulers, packing case slats or any other light, rigid material that comes to hand can be used. If lower limbs are being wrapped then always include the toes in the wrapping or bandaging.

Minimizing swelling

Most swelling is due to bleeding and the accumulation of inflammatory fluids under the skin. Where the skin is not torn then applying ice packs, or cold water hosing for 10-15 minutes is beneficial as it helps constrict small blood vessels, aids blood clotting and helps with the re-absorption of fluid from the area. For lower limb injuries, the foot or lower limb can be placed in a bucket into which a cold water hose is allowed to run freely – the whirlpool effect is very beneficial. If the area can be bandaged, it

First Aid Kit



An emergency first aid kit is a must in all households. We have put a list together of economic but satisfactory items that could cope with most emergencies:

- Cotton wool – 1 roll
- Cotton gauze bandages, three or four of various widths, eg 50mm & 75mm
- Elastoplast rolls – 1 each of 50mm & 75 mm
- Self-clinging bandages such as Coflex or Vetwrap, three or four of various sizes, eg 50mm & 75mm
- Antiseptic such as Betadine
- Splinting material of various sizes eg six ice-block sticks plus some stronger material eg 50mm polythene pipe cut lengthways in half
- Scissors
- Bucket – about 5L capacity.

should be done immediately after the initial application of cold therapy.

Pain relief

This requires more than drugs. Petting and stroking to extend the bond of human caring can be surprisingly effective in calming a nervous, frightened, injured dog. Keeping the patient quiet and comfortable, warm in cool weather and cool in hot weather is also important. Aspirin is a safe and effective drug in greyhounds when veterinary attention is some hours away. A normal adult human dose, given once, will not cause any problems, but do not give your hound paracetamol without veterinary advice. Some human anti-inflammatory drugs are quite toxic to dogs, e.g. Naproxin (Naprosyn). If in doubt, don't use it or check with your vet first.

A final tip for cleaning wounds that do not need veterinary attention, or where veterinary help is some hours away. Add 1 level teaspoon of ordinary salt to 600ml of warm water and use this to bathe or irrigate contaminated wounds. Such a solution has exactly the same salt concentration as normal body fluids and is therefore painless. ■

