

**March 5<sup>th</sup> Edition – NHS Article**

**Northwoods Humane Society – Alecia Austin, Shelter Manager**

### **Pet First Aid Basics – Be Prepared for Emergencies**

As pet owners, we want nothing more than to keep our furry companions safe, healthy, and happy. While we hope we never have to deal with an emergency, knowing basic pet first aid can make all the difference in critical situations. Whether it's a minor injury or a more serious health scare, understanding how to respond could save your pet's life.

#### **1. How to Perform Pet CPR**

CPR is a vital skill that can be lifesaving in an emergency, especially in cases of choking, trauma, or cardiac arrest. Here's how to perform CPR on your dog or cat:

##### **Step-by-Step for Dogs:**

**Check for breathing:** Lay your dog on their side and check their airway to see if they're breathing. If there's no breathing or gasping, begin CPR.

**Position your hands:** Place one hand over the ribcage near the heart (just behind the elbow), and place your other hand on top of the first.

**Compression:** Apply firm pressure, compressing the chest about 1/3 of the way down, at a rate of 100-120 compressions per minute.

**Rescue Breathing:** After every 30 compressions, give your dog two breaths. Close their mouth and breathe through their nose, watching for their chest to rise.

**Continue:** Alternate between chest compressions and rescue breaths until help arrives or your pet starts breathing again.

It's important to get them to the vet as soon as possible

##### **For Cats:**

**Check for breathing** and perform rescue breathing and compressions with your hands in the same manner as for dogs, but adjust the pressure based on the smaller size of your cat.

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#### **2. Wound Care and Bleeding Control**

When your pet gets a cut, scrape, or wound, it's crucial to act quickly to minimize the risk of infection or further injury.

##### **For Minor Wounds:**

**Clean the wound:** Use clean water to rinse the wound and remove debris. If the wound is large or deep, or if the bleeding doesn't stop, you should seek veterinary help immediately.

**Apply Pressure:** If the wound is bleeding heavily, use a clean cloth or gauze pad to apply direct pressure until the bleeding stops.

**Bandaging:** If needed, apply a bandage to protect the wound and keep it clean. Be careful not to make it too tight, as it could cut off circulation.

### **For Major Wounds:**

**Stop the Bleeding:** Apply pressure to the wound using a clean cloth. If the bleeding doesn't stop after a few minutes, elevate the limb if possible, and apply more pressure.

**Wrap the Wound:** Use a clean bandage or cloth to cover the wound. Do not use a tourniquet unless instructed by a professional, as it could cause more harm than good.

**Get to a Vet Quickly:** Major wounds, deep cuts, or puncture wounds need immediate veterinary care to prevent infection and manage pain

**3. Choking and Obstruction** If your pet is choking and unable to breathe, time is of the essence.

**Signs of Choking:** Pawing at the mouth, difficulty breathing or excessive coughing, gagging or retching, salivating or foaming at the mouth.

### **How to Help a Choking Dog:**

**Open their mouth carefully:** If possible, gently open your dog's mouth to see if you can dislodge the object. Use your fingers to pull out any visible obstruction, but don't push it further down the throat.

**Heimlich Maneuver:** If you can't remove the object, you may need to perform the Heimlich maneuver. For a medium or large dog, place your hands just behind their ribcage and give a firm, quick thrust. For small dogs, hold them with their head facing down, supporting their abdomen, and give a few sharp back blows between the shoulder blades.

### **For Cats:**

It can be harder to perform Heimlich on a cat, so it's important to get them to the vet as soon as possible if they're choking.

**4. Hypothermia:** Extreme temperatures can quickly cause harm to pets, so it's crucial to know the signs and how to react. Right now the north woods brings on the concern of Hypothermia.

**Signs of Hypothermia:** Shivering or trembling, lethargy or weakness, cold ears or paws, pale gums. **How to Help:** **Bring them inside** to a warm area. **Warm them gradually** by wrapping them in a blanket or using warm (not hot) water bottles. **Seek veterinary care** if they don't improve quickly.