

HEALTH

First aid kits and tips for caring for your animal



Opinion



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Animals, like humans, have accidents or become unwell. They tread on something sharp and get a severe cut, or a heavy object falls on them and bruises their paw, so walking hurts. Maybe they have eaten something that isn't good for them, and they start vomiting and have diarrhoea - or something a lot worse happens, like being hit by a car or ingesting poison.

Most households have emergency medical items like bandaids, bandages, antiseptic ointments, tweezers, and scissors for accidents that happen to the people in the house. But are those kits suitable for their pets and other animals, or do they need a pet emergency kit?

This article will outline some contents for a simple first aid kit for your pet or working dogs or smaller animals. Large domestic animals may need additional items and you can discuss this with your vet.

Remember, first aid is not a substitute for going to a veterinary clinic - it is only a first response to an immediate serious problem. You should always seek veterinary advice and care if your animal is sick or injured from veterinary medical professionals with certifications and registration in Fiji

What should you keep in a simple animal First Aid Kit?

- Items will vary according to the size and type of animal, but a base kit will include:
- Sterile saline solution: Used to clean dirty wounds or to flush out an eye (a homemade solution of 1 cup of cooled freshly boiled water with ½ teaspoon of salt and be used but does not store)
- Antibiotic cream: Apply to the wound to prevent infection. An example is Bactroban cream which can be obtained from your veterinary clinic or pharmacy
- Sterile non-adherent (non-stick) pad: to put directly over the fresh wound
- Cotton gauze bandage: If the wound is on a leg - wrap it around the leg. Always start at the paw and work your way up to avoid swelling and possible damage.



Another photo of Buck - 8 weeks old and weighing only one kilogram!

- Elastic wrap or adhesive first aid tape: to hold the bandage on!

Note:

Human bandaids should not be used on animals. They are very adhesive and will stick to the animal's fur. They will be hard to remove and cause pain to your animal.

- A nylon slip lead (one that you can slip over their head and it becomes a collar and a lead) as you may need to tie the animal up to stop it from running away.
- Simple semi-blunt scissors: For trimming that may need to be done to bandages and hair
- Disposable plastic/rubber gloves: For your protection.
- An old towel to clean up spills etc
- Have a card with a vet clinic number in the kit so that you are not wasting time

What additional items do I need for larger animals?

Depending on the type of farm animal that you have will mean that you will keep different items on hand.

These may include things like a drench for your goats/sheep and a drench syringe, medicines for bloated animals, Iodine and wound spray for open cuts and abrasions, some betadine wipes to clean the wound, bandages, large gauze pads, bandage tape, scissors and for yourself some hand sanitizer and bandaids (incase you hurt yourself!). If it is a wound, it is important to keep it clean and contact your veterinary clinic for the best advice for any topical applications.

For larger animals, it is easier to have items in a large plastic container so that you can easily transport it to the animal in distress.

Again, it is important to contact your veterinary clinic if you have any questions at all regarding care and especially if the situation is severe.

What accidents or injuries could happen, and what should you do?

First and foremost, you need to stay calm if there is an injury or illness issue with your animal or with a stray animal. Animals can pick up on your fear and will become even more fearful and anxious if you appear to be, so even though it may be distressing, try to remain calm and speak to the animal softly and in even tones.

Ensure the area is safe for you and the animal. Always approach a sick or injured animal slowly and calmly. If necessary, use a muzzle with dogs, but make sure they can

breathe easily.

If possible call a vet clinic. They will help you assess the probable severity of the injury and guide you through the first aid process.

Below are some everyday things that may happen and easy first-aid advice. After a serious incident, always take your animal to the veterinary clinic for proper care and attention.

■ Bleeding:

Basic care is to control the bleeding by applying firm but gentle pressure to the wound with a clean cloth or bandage - do this as quickly as possible to avoid excess blood loss. If possible, elevate the wound to reduce the blood flow. It is important to keep the wound clean

■ Burns:

Flush or pour water over the burned area with cool water for at least 5 minutes, and then cover the burn with a clean, non-stick bandage.

■ Poisoning:

Call your veterinary clinic immediately. Do not induce vomiting without professional advice, as some substances can do more harm on the way back up.

■ Fractures:

If possible immobilise the area with a makeshift splint. Handle the animal gently and with care to avoid causing more pain. Take the animal to the veterinary clinic as soon as possible.

■ Seizures:

Clear the area around the animals of items to avoid injury. Do not try to restrain the pet. Time how long the seizure lasts and how frequent until you can get to a veterinary clinic. Contact your veterinary clinic if it lasts more than a few minutes.

■ Teeth and gums:

Broken teeth, gum infections or foreign objects stuck in the mouth will be painful, can cause major infections and require veterinary attention.

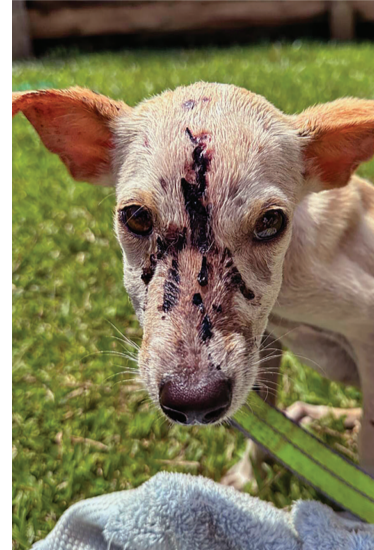
■ Eyes:

Scratches, foreign objects or infections require veterinary care.

■ Labour and birthing complications:

If you think your pet is having difficulties during labour and birthing or if she has been in labour for an extended period, it may need veterinary assistance.

Always remember that first aid is not a substitute for professional veterinary care. After providing immediate assistance, call your veterinary clinic for an appointment as soon as possible. If you have any doubts about what to do in the first instance, call the veterinary clinic



Buck just after being picked up after he was found abandoned on the side of the road.



Buck, happy, healthy and relaxed in his new home.

for advice.

BUCK'S STORY

Meet Buck - a one-year-old cute, happy and healthy 'Fiji Special' puppy. But Buck wasn't always this way; luckily, it has a happy ending.

Buck was on the side of a road near Salt Lake in Vanua Levu, abandoned and very thin, where he was noticed by people in a passing car.

On the way back, 2 hours later, he was still there so the couple decided to stop and see if they could help. Grabbing an old towel in the car, they approached the dog, who was so thin and weak that he didn't resist.

They noticed that the mark on his head was actually a severe cut and that his teeth were protruding unnaturally.

Gently they wrapped a towel around him and picked him up. Once in the car he collapsed into the lady's lap as he was so weak and exhausted.

The couple decided to take him straight to the veterinary clinic in Savusavu. The couple called him Buck - due to his teeth being at such a weird angle!

When they arrived at the clinic, Buck was sedated and his head wound cleaned.

It had been cut through to the skull, and because there was not much skin there, it was unable to be stitched, so it was bandaged together.

The damage to Buck's teeth was much more severe than it appeared, and the only option was to remove his four front teeth

must read

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As a non-profit charity, Animals Fiji depends on donations to continue in its work to support animals across Fiji.

To find out more about Animals Fiji's services and how you can help, please contact their Savusavu Clinic at (+679) 998 6253 or Nadi Clinic at (+679) 993 6647 or visit their website at www.animalsfiji.org.

>ANIMALS FIJI

were removed. The couple were given painkillers and antibiotics for Buck and instructions on how to care for him.

Buck was so thin - he weighed only about 1 kilogram. From his teeth, the clinic staff said that he was probably about eight weeks old but, due to his malnourished state, looked about four weeks old.

The process of getting Buck healthy was slow. Because of the damage to his teeth and gums, he couldn't chew, so porridge was his main food. The couple decided to keep Buck.

He wasn't scared at all of them but actually seemed to be grateful for his new home and the love and attention he was receiving. He is now a very loyal and playful puppy who loves his food!

The lesson from this story is that taking any injured stray animal to a veterinary clinic for a check-up is of utmost importance. Buck's head wound may not have healed without proper cleaning and care and could have become badly infected.

His mouth and teeth would have been permanently deformed without the proper surgery and care, making it hard for Buck to eat. He would likely not have survived.

This story highlights the importance of taking injured or abandoned animals to a veterinary clinic for a thorough examination and proper medical attention.

It reminds us that proper care can make a big difference in an animal's life.

Source: Animals Fiji



Buck now at one year old.