

FIRST AID AND EMERGENCY CARE

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Bleeding

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Pets often suffer blood loss as a result of trauma. Some bleeding is visible, and is a result of a cut or laceration, while internal bleeding occurs inside the body (such as in the chest or abdomen) and is not be visible to the naked eye. If bleeding is severe or continuous, the pet may lose enough blood to cause [shock](#); loss of as little as 2 teaspoons per pound of body weight may cause shock, which doctors usually detect as a high heart rate and low blood pressure. Emergencies may arise that require you to control the bleeding, even if it is just during [transportation](#) to the veterinary facility. Pet owners should know how to safely stop hemorrhage (bleeding) if their pet is injured.

Techniques to Stop External Bleeding

The following techniques are listed in order of preference. The first rule when dealing with an injured pet is to avoid injury to yourself, so take appropriate precautions (such as the use of a muzzle) to avoid being bitten. For all techniques below, seek veterinary attention immediately after stopping the bleeding, or on the way to the veterinary hospital.

Direct Pressure

Gently press a compress (a pad of clean cloth, feminine sanitary product or gauze) over the bleeding area, so it can absorb the blood and allow it to clot. Do not disturb blood clots after they have formed. If blood soaks through, do not remove the pad; simply add additional layers of cloth and continue the direct pressure more evenly. The compress can be bound in place using loosely applied bandage material, which frees the hands of the first provider for other emergency actions. If you don't have a compress, you can use a bare hand or finger.



Direct pressure on a wound is the most preferable way to stop bleeding.

Elevation

If a severely bleeding wound is on the foot or leg, gently elevate the leg so that the wound is above the level of the heart.

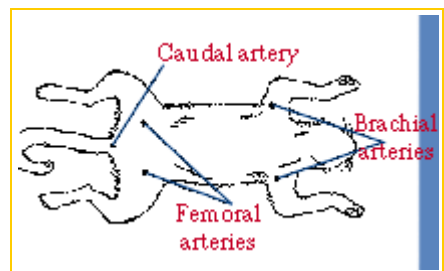
Elevation uses the force of gravity to help reduce blood pressure in the injured area, slowing the bleeding. Elevation is most effective in larger animals with longer limbs where greater distances from the wound to the heart are possible. Direct pressure with compresses should also be maintained to maximize the benefits of elevation.



Elevation of a limb combined with direct pressure is an effective way to stop bleeding.

Pressure on the Supplying Artery

If external bleeding continues after you have used direct pressure and elevation, use your finger or thumb to place pressure over the main artery to the wound. Apply pressure to the femoral artery in the groin (on the inside of the thigh) for severe bleeding of a rear leg; to the brachial artery in the inside part of the upper front leg for bleeding of a front leg; or to the caudal artery at the base of the tail if the wound is on the tail. Continue application of direct pressure. Seek veterinary attention immediately.



Tourniquet

sputtering or pumping from a wound, which is a rare occurrence, consider the use of a tourniquet. Use a wide (2-inch or more) piece of cloth and wrap it around the limb twice and tie it into a knot. Then tie a short stick or similar object into the knot as well. Twist the stick to tighten the tourniquet until the bleeding stops. Secure the stick in place with another piece of cloth and write down the time it was applied. Every 20 minutes loosen the tourniquet for 15 to 20 seconds. Remember this is potentially dangerous and can often result in disability or amputation.



A tourniquet should only be used as a last-resort, life-saving measure!

Internal Bleeding

Internal bleeding is a life-threatening condition, but it is not obvious like external bleeding. Any bleeding that is visible is external. Internal bleeding occurs inside the body and will not be seen. In internal bleeding, blood pools in the stomach or chest but does not result in blood in the stool or bleeding from the rectum. There are, however, some external signs of internal bleeding:

- The pet is pale (check the gums).
- The pet is cool on the legs, ears, or tail.
- The pet is coughing up blood.
- The pet is unusually subdued.

If you see any of these signs, immediately transport your pet to a veterinary facility for professional help. Most cases of internal bleeding will require intensive therapy in a veterinary hospital. Remember: internal bleeding is not visible on the outside.

Date Published: 12/31/1994

Date Reviewed/Revised: 8/17/2009