

Save A Life: learn animal CPR by Dr. Feldman

Airway

The first step in animal CPR, after determining non-responsiveness, is to obtain a patent airway. You should not continue on, until this step has been achieved.

1. Carefully pull the tongue out of the animal's mouth

WARNING: even an unresponsive dog may bite by instinct!!

2. Make sure that the neck is reasonably straight; try to bring the head in-line with the neck.

WARNING: Do not hyperextend in cases where neck trauma exists

3. Attempt 2 rescue breaths, by closing the mouth, and performing mouth-to-nose ventilations. If they go in with no problems continue to B-Breathing.

4. Reposition the neck and try step 3 again.

5. Visibly inspect the airway by looking into the mouth, and down the throat for foreign objects occluding the airway.

Unlike human-CPR, rescuers may reach into the airway and remove foreign objects that are visible

6. Proceed to the Heimlich maneuver

Heimlich

After attempting to ventilate:

7. Turn the animal upside down, with its back against your chest

8. With both arms, give 5 sharp thrusts (bear hugs) to the abdomen. Perform each thrust as if it is the one that will expel the object

9. Stop, check to see if the object is visible in the airway, if so, remove it and give 2 mouth-nose rescue breaths. If the breaths do not go in, go back to step 1

Use gravity to help you expel the object

Breathing

1. After achieving a patent airway, one must determine whether the animal is breathing, and whether this breathing is effective:

2. Carefully pull the tongue out of the animals mouth

WARNING: even an unresponsive dog may bite by instinct!!

3. Make sure that the neck is reasonably straight; try to bring the head in-line with the neck.

WARNING: Do not hyperextend in cases where neck trauma exists

4. Ventilate the animal by closing the mouth, and performing mouth-to-nose ventilations. If they do not go in with ease go to A-Airway

5. Ventilate at 20 breaths per minute. If supplemental Oxygen is available, and the animal is breathing on its own, use a high-flow blowby.

WARNING: Do not attempt to intubate the animal, without prior training, and properly sized ET tubes.

6. Proceed to C-Circulation, while continuing respiratory support as necessary

Circulation

This is the final step of CPR and should only be initiated after the airway and breathing steps have been completed:

1. Make sure that there are no major (pooling/spurting blood) points of bleeding. Control as necessary

2. Lay the animal on its right side

3. Locate your hands where its left elbow touches the chest. Approximately the middle of the rib-cage

4. Compress the chest 15 times followed by 2 rescue breaths (3 compressions every 2 seconds). Compress:

a) 1/2" - small dogs

b) 1" - medium dogs

c) 1.5" - large dogs

5. Repeat as necessary

Important: Animals do not have palpable carotid pulses. You can only obtain a femoral pulse in the inguinal crease. (Palpate carefully on a conscious dog!)

Extra

During an emergency it is very important that you remain calm. Animals can sense your unease, but cannot understand what is happening and you cannot verbally tell them. Your body language is very important. Be calm, yet deliberate in your actions.

When you determine that you either have corrected the life-threatening problem, or are unable to stabilize the animal, you should transport to the nearest emergency veterinary hospital.

Notify your emergency clinic that you are coming in with a dog in respiratory arrest with a foreign body airway obstruction and/or cardiac arrest.

Give them the following information via phone if possible:

Your name

Your ETA

Steps taken (CPR, O2...)

Breed/size

If a foreign body, what the suspected object is

If a poison or medication has been ingested

Mechanism of injury (hit by car...)

Write the phone number of the 24 hour animal hospital nearest you her

About the author

Dr. Feldman is a Massachusetts and New York Licensed Veterinarian and a member of the Veterinary Emergency and Critical Care Society. This document is primarily aimed at

EMS and Emergency Medical personnel who may encounter animals in arrest.

Pet owners should consult their veterinarian for specific details on procedures outlined here.

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