

## EMERGENCY *Situations*

### WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?

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Sam the Labrador Retriever was playing outside when he saw a cat on the other side of the road. His owner saw him dart across the street, and watched as every pet owner's nightmare came to life and Sam was hit by a car.

Do you know what to do in an emergency situation like Sam's? There are several things to remember that can help prepare you for emergencies, and can potentially be life-saving for your pet.

The most important thing to do if your pet is in an emergency situation is to stay calm. If you are hysterical, shouting, or panicking, it will often affect your pet, who is already stressed and possibly in shock. Try to remain calm and collected while you make a quick initial assessment of your pet. Having a plan in place for emergency situations like this is one of the best ways to be able to stay calm and get your pet the medical attention they need. Many family veterinary practices have an after-hours emergency number or work closely with an emergency hospital. A crucial part of being able to respond quickly in a critical situation is making sure your family is aware of the contact information and location of the nearest animal emergency hospital.

Trauma caused by emergency situations is often serious, even if it is not always initially evident. Sometimes pets can escape emergency situations (such

as a run-in with a car) with little more than scrapes and bruises, but unfortunately many times pets suffer more significant injuries. A broken bone is generally a more obvious traumatic injury, but injuries like internal bleeding or organ damage are often not visible to the naked eye. Injuries such as a ruptured bladder, bruising or bleeding in the lungs, abdominal bleeding, and head trauma may not

present themselves immediately and can take time to "declare themselves". Even for those fortunate pets who seem to escape serious injury in emergency situations, overnight observation by a veterinarian is often warranted. Shock is also a concern when dealing with emergencies and trauma. Shock is a condition where the cells in the body can't get enough oxygen due to decreased blood flow. Just like in people, shock in animals is very serious, especially if there are other injuries involved. It is imperative that your pet be seen by a veterinarian as soon as possible in an emergency situation for



evaluation and diagnostics, which may include radiographs (x-rays), an ultrasound, or blood work depending on the situation.

The best way to be prepared for emergencies with your pets is to make sure your family has a plan in place. At Gulf Coast Animal Emergency Hospital we are available for emergency care 24 hours a day on the weekends, and from 6pm - 9am, Monday through Friday. We work closely with the specialists at Gulf Coast Veterinary Specialists, who are located in the same building, at 1111 West Loop South, Houston, TX 77027.