

Norwich Terriers, 8-19

Title: Dog Emergency Medical Bag

A well-stocked emergency medical bag is a handy thing to have for your dogs when traveling. When I've had minor emergencies at dog shows, fortunately, Susan Miller Hall was there with her Dog Emergency Medical Bag. Susan is a retired critical care nurse, and I encouraged her to write an article for our breed club's newsletter describing the supplies in her bag. Because her article has been so popular, we are sharing a condensed version in this column.

The information provided does not substitute for professional care from a licensed veterinarian. In fact, you should consult your vet to help assemble a Dog Emergency Medical Bag with contents that are familiar to you and that are appropriate for your dog. Some items require a prescription. Having a Medical Bag gives you the ability to administer first aid and initiate treatment in case of an emergency away from home.

Susan's bag has transparent enclosures so that it's easy to find what you need. Basic first aid supplies include rubber gloves, assorted syringes, catheter for irrigation, hemostat or tweezers, gauze pads, rolled gauze bandages, bandage scissors, rectal thermometer and lubricant, small cuticle scissors, cotton swabs, and isopropyl alcohol antiseptic wipes. She also carries several over-the-counter and prescription drugs, along with a pill splitter. Your veterinarian can advise when to use each medication, safe dosage, and possible substitutions and/or additions. The contents of your Medical Bag will vary depending on any underlying health and chronic conditions, any known allergies, and how long you anticipate being away from home.

WOUND CARE

Wound care items include gauze pads and clean towels to use to stop bleeding (apply direct pressure until the bleeding stops). After checking the wound, carefully remove any superficial foreign bodies, and cleanse with warm water, sterile saline or **Wound Wash**. Cleansing and a thin layer of topical antibiotic ointment or spray may be all that is needed for an abrasion. **Vetericyn VF Wound and Infection Care** is a topical antibiotic spray product for treating large abrasions and hot spots. Another option is **MiconHex+Triz**, an antimicrobial and antifungal. You may need to bandage the wound to protect your dog from licking it. Check for signs of infection (redness, swelling, tenderness, foul discharge/pus) at least once a day. Bite wounds, puncture wounds, and big lacerations are more prone to infection and should be checked by a vet in case more extensive wound debridement, sutures, and/or systemic antibiotics are necessary. If the wound is caused by a penetrating object, such as a stick, do not attempt to remove it. Stabilize the injured area and get your dog to the vet as soon as possible.

In the event of a draining abscess, wipe the skin surface clean and irrigate the cavity with sterile saline or 3% hydrogen peroxide diluted 1:1 with clean water or sterile saline. Then apply **Triple Antibiotic**, or **Neosporin** topical ointment. If the wound is on a leg and needs a dressing, cleanse and apply antibiotic ointment if necessary, cover with a **Gauze Pad** or **Rolled Gauze** and wrap with vet wrap (but not so tight as to compromise blood flow).

DIARRHEA AND OTHER GASTROINTESTINAL ISSUES

In the case of diarrhea, first try switching to **Hill's I/D** canned food, sprinkled with **Forteflora** (a canine probiotic). For persistent diarrhea that does respond to diet or probiotics, Susan carries **Tylan (Tylosin)** an antibiotic used to treat diarrhea and non-specific colitis. For persistent vomiting and vomiting due to motion sickness, she carries **Cerenia (Maropitant citrate)** (prescription required). **Panacur (Fenbendazole)** or **Metronidazole (Flagyl)** (prescriptions required) will work if you suspect Giardia, a common microscopic protozoan parasite that causes persistent watery diarrhea and foul sulfur-smelling intestinal gas. Panacur is available without prescription and the course of treatment is longer, but it may relieve symptoms until you get to your vet.

If your dog swallows something dangerous, like a medication off a hotel floor, anything with Xylitol (e.g., sugarless chewing gum) or any unknown substance, call the **ASPCA Animal Poison Control (888) 426-4435 immediately**. If they advise you to induce vomiting, and you have a bottle of **3% Hydrogen Peroxide** and a 10 mL plastic syringe on hand, you will save a lot of time. Spread newspaper or a towel on the ground or floor,

measure out the recommended dose of hydrogen peroxide based on your dog's weight (usually 0.5 to 1.0 mL per pound), and administer into your dog's mouth. Vomiting should result after 5 minutes. If your dog does not vomit within 5 minutes, the dose may be repeated one more time if advised by Poison Control. You may be instructed to get your dog to a veterinary clinic as soon as possible.

SUSPECTED BACTERIAL INFECTIONS

Susan carries three antibiotics in her bag (she acknowledges that antibiotics ordinarily should not be administered without checking blood tests and/or culturing specimens). However, on a trip away from home, having a course of antibiotics available makes it easier for you to initiate prompt, appropriate treatment after telephone consultation with your vet if your dog becomes ill. Her bag contains **Doxycycline tablets** (her drug of choice if in a tick-infested environment and the dog is symptomatic for tick-borne disease). **Clavamox** and **Baytril** tablets are broad-spectrum antibiotics that your vet may dispense for your Medical Bag to be used in an emergency.

BEE STINGS, HIVES, OTHER ALLERGIC RESPONSES

Benedryl (diphenhydramine) is a common over-the-counter antihistamine tablet that counteracts acute allergic symptoms. **1% Topical Cortisone** cream is a common over-the-counter item that is useful to lessen skin itching and irritation from insect bites and other skin irritants.

EARS & EYES

If the dog is shaking his head or scratching at his ear(s), check for any foreign body, insect bite or discharge. You may want to irrigate with **TrizULTRA + Keto Flush**, a cleansing antifungal solution. If a red or runny eye, with no purulent discharge, **Clear Eyes** eye drops, a Visine product may be helpful. **Systane** lubricant eye drops, a buffered preservative-free irrigation is another choice, or a sterile saline wash. You may wish to start treatment with ophthalmic antibiotic items such as **Triple Antibiotic Ophthalmic Ointment** (contains Neomycin, Polymyxin B Sulfates and Bacitracin) or **Tobramycin Ophthalmic Solution**, an antibiotic solution (both require a prescription).

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Adapted from an article previously published by Susan Miller Hall. Photo Credit: Susan Miller Hall