

How To Deal With A Wounded Dog

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Dog Wounds fall into four principal categories: incised (when there is a clean cut, as from a knife), lacerated (when the skin and other parts are torn), contused (when bruising is also present) and punctured (when the wound is small and deep, as when caused by a sharp-pointed instrument or a dog's tooth). The care of smaller skin wounds will be dealt with here.

As a preliminary to dealing with any wound, however small, always wash your hands.

When a small injury is badly contaminated with dirt and matted with dried blood these must first be removed, using plain warm boiled water only, in order to see the extent of the wound. Some injuries which appear very bad will be found to be quite minor after receiving this preliminary cleaning up.

Carefully remove the hair for about an inch round the wound and, in a long-haired dog, shorten any hair near it so that it cannot fall across the surface. Nail scissors (the straight kind) will be found useful for removing the hair round the edges of the wound, but be careful that hair does not enter the wound.

Examine the cut or injury and if there are any loose shreds of skin, hair, or other foreign matter in the wound itself remove them with forceps previously sterilised by boiling for two minutes. The forceps will also be useful in examining the wound if it is at all deep. Always work with great gentleness and smoothness, never jabbing or prodding, and be as speedy as efficiency permits. Bathe the wound carefully with warm water and Dettol (one teaspoonful to the pint) using gentle, sweeping strokes and not dabbing or rubbing. Use each piece of cotton wool once only and wipe away from the injury. Do not apply ointment of any kind.

Most wounds are better left unbandaged unless large in extent (when they should receive veterinary attention) or where they can be contaminated, for example, the foot.

Lysol and household disinfectants should never be used for bathing wounds as they are usually poisonous or too strong. Iodine, while useful if no other agent is available, cannot be recommended as it is irritating to the tissues. Dettol makes a useful antiseptic, properly diluted, for dogs. T.C.P. is also useful as a mild antiseptic. Alternatively a saline solution can be used (one large teaspoonful of salt to a pint of boiled water).

The subsequent dressing of the wound will depend on its type and gravity but, broadly speaking, the less injuries are touched the better after the initial cleansing. The tissues must have time to heal, and constant swabbing with even the mildest antiseptic is not advisable as sepsis is most unlikely to occur if the wound has been properly treated in the first place. It should be inspected daily but not touched unless there is any discharge. Once the wound is clean, subsequent blood clots and scabs need not be removed if clean in appearance, as they protect the injury. This does not apply to wounds of a deeply penetrating type, which must be kept open for free drainage. As long as the injury looks healthy and is drying up and the skin around a normal colour, all is well. With sepsis the skin surrounding the place is reddened and inflamed, the wound is either closed or partially so, there may or may not be considerable discharge, and the edges of the wound will be swollen, red, shiny and unhealthy-looking. Such cases are, however, extremely rare as the average small, shallow wound heals with remarkable rapidity if properly treated.

When the skin is badly torn, or the cut longer than about an inch, it will need more elaborate treatment and suturing by a

veterinary surgeon. Such cases are better not dressed by the owner as damage can easily be caused by unskilled handling. Dirt or other contamination can be gently removed with boiled water and the surface of the injury protected by a piece of lint and a bandage until the animal can be attended to by a veterinary surgeon. In the case of a cut requiring suturing, the lips of the wound should be brought together as closely as possible before applying the lint and the bandaging should be firm in order to keep the wound to some extent closed

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