

Review:

First Aid for the Active Dog

A book by Sid Gustafson, D.V.M.

By Ronda Clark, D.V.M.



“First Aid for the Active Dog is a book suitable for most types of canine performance activities, be it flyball or agility, hunting or hiking, fishing, or even search and rescue. I found the book an informative addition to any dog enthusiast’s library.”

As a veterinarian and canine performance exhibitor, my fellow exhibitors often ask me questions about their canine teammates’ health, and especially about health problems their dogs are having during a competition weekend. Although I am always happy to help when needed, I think many exhibitors would benefit from and appreciate first aid information that they can have at their fingertips.

I found Dr. Gustafson’s text, *First Aid for the Active Dog*, to be just the ticket for referencing information quickly and easily, especially when one is traveling with a dog and a vet isn’t readily accessible. With just over 110 pages, the book is small enough to put in a training bag or pack. The inside cover lists the contents of a suggested first aid kit that has nearly anything a person would need to deal with most minor canine emergencies.

Before discussing the causes, signs, and treatments for individual diseases or injuries, the first four chapters give excellent insight into accident prevention, securing the scene of the accident to prevent further harm to dog or owner, restraining and examining injured or sick dogs, and taking and evaluating vital signs. Clark also includes muzzling techniques, normal heart rates, respiratory rates, normal pupil size, and response evaluation.

Subsequent sections cover primary body systems (that is, respiratory, gastrointestinal, musculoskeletal, and so on) and are further subdivided into more particular chapters addressing specific problems: vomiting or diarrhea, wounds and bleeding, exposure to extreme heat or cold, seizures, and so on.

Throughout the book, many photographs and illustrations show techniques for restraint and handling of injured

dogs, and “Caution” boxes reiterate important points mentioned in preceding topics. Also sprinkled throughout the book are captioned “Dog First Aid Tips” that stress situations that are likely beyond a layperson’s expertise and encourage handlers to seek veterinary attention as soon as possible. A common phrase threaded throughout the entire book is “First, do no harm,” a reminder that dog owners should not attempt to perform procedures they are unfamiliar with, or administer medications that may not be approved for use in dogs.

Each chapter lists:

- Common causes
- Frequent signs and symptoms
- Prevention suggestions
- Treatment options and recommendations

The last seven chapters discuss environmental dangers, including insect bites and stings, snakebite, porcupine quills, fishhooks and lines, hypothermia and frostbite, heat stroke and dehydration.

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Ronda Clark has been a small animal veterinarian in Texas since 1986. She started competing in agility in 1996 and has put Masters titles on three Cairn Terriers and a Miniature Poodle. Ronda is currently competing with a young Cairn and a new Miniature Poodle, and has a young Aussie in training.