



# The Pawprint: Online

Dutch Fork Animal Hospital

Summer 2015

## When NOT to Wait for Veterinary Care!

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As animal lovers, we all worry about our fur-babies' health and happiness but are not always aware of the types of behaviors that can indicate an impending medical emergency. Our goal is to raise your awareness of the most common feline and canine emergencies and the types of signs that are associated with each.

### 1. Trauma

**Any sort of traumatic injury such as being hit by a car, animal fights, falls from higher elevation, wounds and/or lacerations should be seen as soon as possible.**

Traumatic events may include internal injuries that are not always obvious or symptomatic at the time of the injury and can sometimes take days to be readily visible. Even if your pet appears fine at the time, internal injuries such as a ruptured lung, diaphragmatic hernia or internal bleeding may be present and should be assessed. Wounds and lacerations can be deeper than they appear and may be complicated further by infection if not treated quickly.



### 2. Difficulty Breathing

**Dyspnea, the medical term for breathing difficulty, can present itself in several forms** such as wheezing, choking, raspy or weak breaths, or deep labored breaths. Dyspnea can be associated with many different health issues including allergic reactions, heart disease, pulmonary disease, or even foreign bodies in the throat. If your pet is showing signs of respiratory distress, they should be seen by a veterinary professional as soon as possible.

### 3. Difficulty or Inability to Urinate

**Any pet, feline or canine, that is not urinating or having difficulty urinating should be seen by a veterinarian in a timely manner.** Although more common in male felines, urinary blockages can and do occur in canines as well, and are life threatening if not treated in time. If you see blood in your pet's urine or witness straining and difficulty urinating, it is important to seek medical attention to screen for kidney health, urinary tract infection or urinary stones that can escalate into a blockage. If a blockage should occur, immediate medical action is highly recommended.

### 4. Suspected or Known Toxin Exposure

**Suppose you return home to a chewed up box of chewing gum, rat poison or a completely empty bag of baker's chocolate** and suspect your pet is behind it, you should either call your veterinarian or ASPCA Poison Control at (888) 426-4435 for immediate advice on what to do. It is important to consult with either the veterinarian or Poison Control before attempting to induce vomiting as some toxins can be caustic and cause more issues if regurgitated. It is also important to note that many toxins do not cause immediate symptoms and can be slower acting on the body. In the event of suspected toxin exposure, most veterinarians will recommend an examination and bloodwork to further assess the effects of a given toxin on your pet's internal organs before further recommendations can be made.

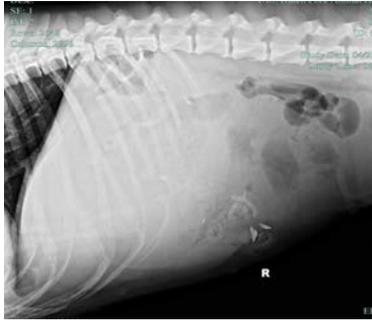
### 5. Foreign Body Ingestion

**Foreign Bodies are any sort of atypical item that is consumed inappropriately** and can range from linear items such as string, ribbon, and fishing line to bulkier objects

## Not to Wait continued...

like socks, underwear, rocks, and more. A common issue for both felines and canines, internal foreign bodies can cause gastrointestinal problems on the less severe end to more serious problems

like gastric or intestinal proliferation, obstructions, and even intestinal necrosis. In many cases, exploratory surgery is needed to remove the object to prevent further potentially life threatening complications.



### 6. Bloody or Persistent Vomit and/or Diarrhea

As most pet owners know, some vomiting and diarrhea is pretty normal and will usually resolve itself in 24 to 48 hours with minimal treatment. However, vomit or diarrhea that is bloody or not improving should be assessed by a veterinarian as soon as possible as it can be an indication of a more severe problem such as pancreatitis, foreign body obstruction, hyperthyroidism and more. It is also important to note that vomiting and diarrhea can very quickly lead to dehydration. If your pet has other pre-existing medical issues such as diabetes or kidney/liver failure, it is not recommended to wait more than 24 hours before seeing a veterinarian.

### 7. Seizures or Neurological Conditions

Neurologic problems can manifest in your pet as disorientation, incoordination, unresponsiveness, lethargy, behavior changes and coma. Neurological issues that are assessed and treated quickly tend to have a much better chance for recovery and resolution. Seizures are one of the more common neurological conditions and can be mild to severe in nature, sometimes including uncontrollable shaking, loss of consciousness, paddling and loss of bowel and urinary control. If your pet experiences a seizure for the first time, you should see your veterinarian immediately to rule out toxicity or organ failure before further treatment. It is also recommended that those pets with a history of seizures be monitored more carefully during routine wellness visits and their episodes recorded in a journal or log to keep track of frequency and severity.

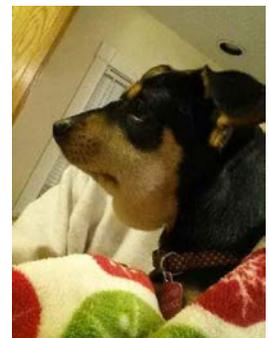
### 8. Pale, Yellow, Purple or Blue Gums

A nice rosy pink is the standard for normal gum or mucous membrane color. Pale or white gums often indicate anemia or a lack of red blood cells, while purple to blue gums are usually a sign of respiratory difficulty or a lack of oxygen flow to the cells. Yellow mucous membrane color is often an indication of liver failure or high counts of bilirubin in the blood. All of these are reasons to bring your pet to the vet for an appointment.



### 9. Allergic Reactions

Anaphylactic reactions are the most serious of allergic reactions and can include vomiting, diarrhea, difficulty breathing, facial swelling, hives, and lethargy. Allergens can affect your pet via air borne exposure, through ingestion, or from direct contact. These types of reactions should be treated quickly to avoid secondary complications and steps made to avoid the allergen in the future.



### 10. Distended Abdomen or Abdominal Pain

If you notice that your pet's abdomen seems distended or bloated and painful, there is a high likelihood that a serious medical problem is occurring and that urgent medical treatment is needed. Abdominal pain or bloating can indicate a build up of excess fluid or gas due to organ failure, trauma, or even a twisting of the stomach that can cause "bloat". Bloat is most common in large breed dogs and is a life threatening condition that needs treatment as soon as possible to better improve your pet's likelihood of recovery. A distended or painful abdo-

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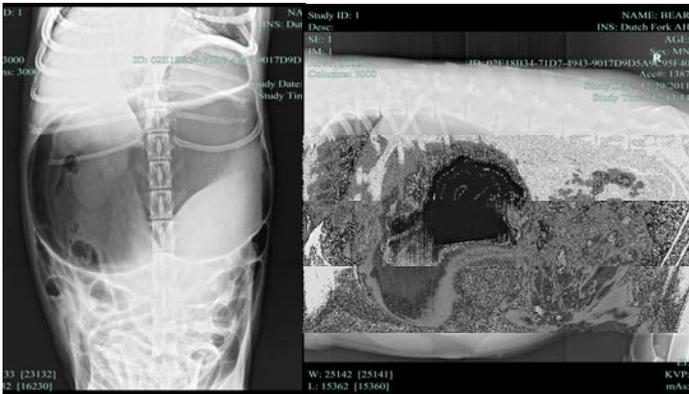
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## Not to Wait continued...

men can also be a sign of growing abdominal tumors that can result in internal bleeding if not assessed in a timely manner.



While this list is by no means all inclusive, it does contain some of the most common signs of pending medical emergencies and is intended to help make the distinction of "when is it okay to wait" a little easier. Medical emergencies are not always easy to identify by the non-medically trained eye, so we advise seeking medical attention as soon as possible when your pets are showing any signs of trouble or distress.

Concerns or questions? Want to know more about any of the conditions mentioned above? Then give us a call at (803) 781-7483 or check out our website at [www.dutchforkanimalhospital.com](http://www.dutchforkanimalhospital.com). You can also email us at [dfah@dfah.net](mailto:dfah@dfah.net) with ideas and suggestions for future newsletter topics! Until next time, be well and be safe!

## Up Coming Events and Opportunities:

- September: Dental Health Month
- Irmo Okra Strut
- Stand up Paddle Boarding Promo w/ Dr. Johnson
- Spay/Neuter Health Month

