

ANIMAL HEALTH TRIAGE

Purpose

The aim of animal health triage is to identify and treat sick animals on initial presentation to the shelter or that become ill while at the shelter.

In general, shelters are for well animals. Animals that arrive sick or that require intensive treatment should be transported as soon as possible to an veterinary care facility. Nevertheless, animals may be present with a variety of pre-existing medical problems – both known (plainly observable or reported by owners) and unknown. Problems likely to be identified include:

- Stress-related behaviors
- Bites
- Aggression
- Infectious diseases (e.g. cat respiratory viruses)
- Parasites
- Flea problem / environmental infestation
- Skin problems
- Eye problems
- Gastrointestinal diseases

To the extent possible, daily care of shelter animals should meet standards of the Animal Welfare Act for housing, daily observation, nutrition, storage of food and supplies, water, exercise, and veterinary first aid.

Preparation

- Insofar as possible, schedule veterinarians and vet techs in advance.
- Insofar as possible, pre-arrange for veterinary facilities to receive cases that require specialized care or equipment. Whenever possible, place these facilities on alert (“pre-order”) prior to incident response.
- Consider pre-staging a mobile veterinary unit on day one and then setting up a triage site over the next few days.
- Since demand may exceed ready resources, identify back-up sources of equipment, supplies, and medications.

Staff

- Triage coordinator: lead veterinarian. Responsibilities normally include organizing the triage, getting drugs and supplies, and acting as liaison for transferring patients to other veterinary facilities as needed. If one person, anticipate one 12-hour shift and then being on-call.
- Veterinarians: examine and treat animals that are sick or injured on presentation to the shelter or that became ill during their stay.
- Veterinary technicians: assist veterinarians with examinations and treatments

Organization

- For heavy patient load: 2 veterinarians and 2 technicians working 12-hour shifts. Also, one kennel staff to clean cages and the area, exercise and feed animals.

When fewer animals are being admitted to the shelter, only 1 veterinarian and 1 technician may be adequate per shift.

- Hold patient rounds between shift changes to familiarize the relieving veterinarians with cases.
- Each day, provide the Triage Coordinator a list of supply and drug needs
- Inform the Triage Coordinator which cases require care beyond the resources of the shelter. The Coordinator identifies appropriate facilities, arranges transport and, whenever possible, attempts to notify the owner. A copy of the animal information sheet, medical records and lab work are sent with the animal.
- Maintain medical records / treatment sheets.
- Triage is only for animals requiring intensive treatment or observation that cannot yet be moved to an external veterinary care facility. Simple medical problems (e.g. oral medications BID) are treated by the attending veterinarians or technicians in the Registration area, although the triage area may serve as the location for the central pharmacy.

Supplies and Equipment

Note: The following list is intended as a rough guide, including both ordinary and rare necessities. Needs will vary with the type and scope of disaster. The most common essentials (☐) are listed first, followed by items that are required less often and in smaller quantities (○). Final selection is at the discretion of the veterinarian in charge.

ANTIBIOTICS

- ☐ Clavamox or Amoxicillin – pill and inj (lots)
- ☐ Doxycycline – pill and inj (lots)
- ☐ Flagyl – pill and inj (lots)
- ☐ Baytril – pill and inj (lots)
- Azithromycin (lots)
- Antirobe – pill and inj
- Tribissen
- Gentocin
- Cephalosporins – pill and inj
- Tetracycline

CARDIAC / RESPIRATORY DRUGS

- ☐ Lasix – oral and inj (lots)
- ☐ Lidocaine
- ☐ Atropine
- ☐ Epinephrine
- Torbutrol – pill and inj
- Terbutaline – pill and inj
- Aminophylline – pill
- Spironolactone (1)
- Nitroglycerin Ointment
- Enalapril
- Digoxin 0.125mg
- Diltiazem
- Amlodipine

- Baby Aspirin
- Dobutamine
- Doxapram

STEROIDS

- Prednisone – oral and inj (lots)
- Solu Delta Cortef
- Dexamethasone
- Prednisone – oral and inj
- Depomedrol

NSAIDS / PAIN

- Metacam
- Rimadyl
- Etogesic
- Dermaxx
- Ascriptin
- Cosequin
- Aspirin

SEDATIVES (LOCK BOX)

- Acepromazine – oral and inj
- Ketamine
- Valium
- Dormitor
- Antisedan

MISC MEDS

- Heparin inj
- Euthanasia solution (LOCK BOX)
- Activated charcoal
- Disinfectants – e.g. chlorhexidine
- Florinef
- Mannitol
- Itraconazole
- Cryproheptadine
- Imuran
- Oxyglobin (a few)
- Oxygen
- Amphogel
- Soloxine
- Tapazole
- Phenobarbitol
- Oxytocin
- Dog / cat vaccines

DERM / EAR

- Benadryl – oral and inj (lots)
- Flea and tick products
- Topical steroid spray

- Miconazole shampoo
- Betadine
- Fly strike repellent
- Ivermectin
- Revolution
- Mitoban dip – Amitraz
- Ear cleaners – Otic Clear; Oti- Calm, etc.
- Silver sulfadiazine
- Cerumite
- Otomax
- Baytril otic
- Otic Domeboro
- Chlorhexaderm shampoo
- Clotrimzole
- Conofite

EYE

- Triple ab ointment (lots)
- Steroid ointment and solution (lots)
- Atropine ointment (lots)
- Optimun
- Eyewash
- Artificial tears
- Tetracycline ointment
- Oral lysine
- Flu stain (lots)
- NSAID drugs (lots)
- Glaucoma meds – Xalatan, Daranide, Pilocarpine, Timopti
- Optimune

DEWORMERS

- Drontal plus
- Panacur
- Pyrantel pamoate
- Albon

INSULINS

- Regular (supplied by owner)
- Nph
- Pzi

NUTRITIONAL SUPPLEMENTS

- Nutrical
- Cat laxative
- Puppy / Kitten milk replacer
- Baby food
- Various prescription diets

IV FLUIDS

- LRS (lots)
- 0.9% NaCl (lots)

- 0.45% / Dextrose (a few; not lots)
- Hespan

ELECTROLYTE MINERAL

- Potassium – oral and inj
- Calcium – oral and inj
- Dextrose
- Vit B
- Vit K
- Sodium bicarbonate
- Taurine
- L-carnitine

GI DRUGS

- Peptobismol
- Lomotil
- Kaopectate
- Pepsid – oral and inj
- Carafate
- Endosorb
- Lactulose
- Tylosin
- Propulsid
- Sulfasalazine
- Viokase
- Reglan oral and inj
- Fiber

WOUNDS

- Betadine scrub and solution (lots)
- Table disinfectant (lots)
- Sterile water or saline (lots)
- Antibiotic ointment pads
- Impregnated sterile water pads
- Collagen pads
- Nexaban
- Liquid skin wound closure
- Medicated skin wipes
- Alcohol
- Novalsan

LAB SUPPLIES

- Parvo tests
- Microscope slides / cover slips
- Quick stains
- Fecal flotation solution
- Mineral oil
- Immersion oil
- Urinalysis dip sticks
- Heartworm antigen tests
- FeLV / FIV tests

- Dermatology skin scrape blades, DTM media
- Schirmer tear test; fluorescein stain

GENERAL MEDICAL SUPPLIES

- Alcohol
- Syringes and needles – all sizes
- IV catheters; butterfly catheters
- Gauze sponges and roll gauze
- Vet Wrap / white tape
- Biohazard bags / sharps containers
- Can openers
- Gloves, masks
- Cleaning supplies – mops etc.
- Office supplies
- Vials for dispensing meds
- Cotton – roll and balls
- Tongue depressors / cotton tip applicators
- Feeding tubes
- Splints / cast material
- Pill pushers
- Pill pockets – dog and cat
- Puppy / kitten nursers
- Elizabethan collars
- Leashes / muzzles
- Fecal loops

EQUIPMENT

- Small refrigerator
- Catch pole
- Fans / extension cords
- Sterile packs for wounds / minor surgery
- Microchip scanner
- Clippers and blades
- Calculators
- Thermometers
- Ophthalmoscope
- Otoscope
- Laryngoscope
- Endotracheal Tubes
- Oxygen and oxygen masks
- Microscope and replacement bulb
- Complete blood count and chemistry panel analyzer (Iddex)
- Portable Xray
- Portable ultrasound
- Tonopen
- Gas Anesthesia Machine
- Centrifuge
- Refractometer
- Heating Pads
- Scale
- IV drip stand

BOOKS

- Pharmacy drug doses book (e.g. Plumb)
- Veterinary Internal Medicine (Ettinger)
- Current Veterinary Therapy
- Infectious diseases (e.g. Greene)
- Emergency medicine (eg Kirk)
- Atlas (pictures) for parasitology
- Clinical pathology (e.g. Duncan & Prasse)
- Anesthesia text
- Ophthalmology text

See also:

[Animal Welfare Code](#) (7 USC Chapter 54), "Transportation, Sale, and Handling of Certain Animals" (USDA, APHIS).

[Animals in Disasters](#) (NIH DIMRC).

[Animals in Public Evacuation Centers](#) (CDC).

[Compendium of Measures to Prevent Disease Associated with Animals in Public Settings](#) (NASPHV).

[Interim Guidelines for Animal Health and Control of Disease Transmission in Pet Shelters](#) (AVMA and CDC).