PET FIRST AID

pocket handbook

THE NATIONAL HUMANE EDUCATION SOCIETY

FIELD NOTES

THE NATIONAL HUMANE EDUCATION SOCIETY

P.O. Box 340
Charles Town, WV 25414
www.nhes.org

"Fostering a sentiment of kindness towards animals in children and adults" since 1948

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Special Thanks to Kurgo Dog Gear for helping to promote pet health and safety.

All emergency care procedures in this book are based on current veterinary guidelines. The procedures may change over time and it is the reader's responsibility to stay informed of those changes. NHES accepts no responsibility for injury or damage resulting from the use of any information presented here.

CONTENTS

Introduction 4
Heart Rate & Pulses 4
Handling 5
- Muzzling 5
- Transporting 6

Techniques 7
- CPR 7
- Breathing 7
- Circulation 8

Emergencies 9
- Bites 9
- Bleeding 10
- Bloating 10
- Burns 11
- Choking 11
- Dehydration 13
- Frostbite 13
- Heatstroke 13
- Hypothermia 14
- Injury 15
- Poisoning 16
- Shock 17
- Traumatic Injury 17

Summer Care Tips 20
Winter Care Tips 21
Emergency Information ..... Back Cover

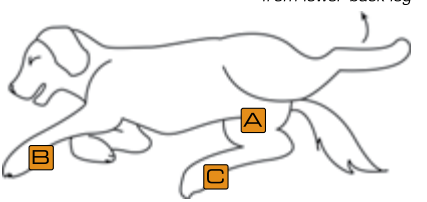
INTRODUCTION

Every pet is unique. Knowing what is normal for your pet is essential in recognizing behaviors that are abnormal. Learn how to recognize your pet's normal temperature, breath rates, heart and pulse rates. These vital signs will be of crucial importance should an emergency arise.

HEART RATE & PULSES

Resting Pulse

Inner thigh ***(A)***



- The inner thigh is the easiest of the three locations to feel for a pulse.
- Lay pet down on either side.
- Gently lift the top back leg away from the lower back leg.
- Using a light touch, place your index and middle fingers where the leg meets the torso. You may use either leg.
- Feel for a pulse and count for 60 seconds.

Front legs - just below the wrist ***(B)***

- With your pet either sitting or laying down
- Locate the area just above the middle pad on the underside of either front paw.
- Place your index and middle fingers in that area and feel for a pulse.
- Count for 60 seconds.

Hind legs - just below the ankle ***(C)***

- Have your pet either sit or lie down
- Locate the area just above the middle pad on the underside of either hind paw.
- Place your index and middle fingers in that area and feel for a pulse.
- Count for 60 seconds.

Heart Rate *(Beats Per Minute)*

Keep in mind that younger animals have faster heartbeats than older ones.

	ALL SIZES	**160-220** BPM
	SMALL (<30 LBS)	**100-160** BPM
	MEDIUM-LARGE (30-90 LBS)	**60-100** BPM
	X-LARGE (>90 LBS)	**60-80** BPM

Breathing Rate

	20-30	BREATHS PER MINUTE	**UP TO 300**	PANTS PER MINUTE
	10-30	BREATHS PER MINUTE	**UP TO 200**	PANTS PER MINUTE

Normal Temperatures

	100.5°F – 102.5°F
	100.2°F – 102.8°F

HANDLING

Always approach a sick or injured animal with caution. Even your beloved pet may be aggressive when sick or in pain. Approach slowly, stoop down, allow them to smell the back of your hand, speak softly and avoid making direct eye contact.

Muzzling

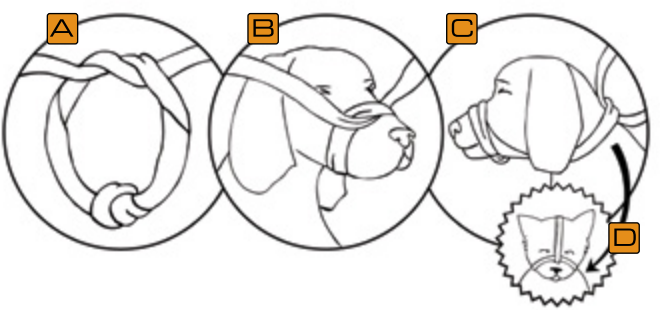
For your safety you should muzzle your sick or injured pet if possible. Only muzzle your pet if it is safe to do so and never force restraint. **Never muzzle a pet that is vomiting, coughing or having difficulty breathing.**

Makeshift Muzzle

If you do not have a store bought muzzle on hand, you can use either a nylon strap or roll of gauze to make your own makeshift muzzle.

1. Start with a material of at least 18" long.
2. Tie a knot in the middle.
3. Make a loop large enough to fit over your pet's nose ***(A)***
4. Get behind your pet and slip the loop over the nose. *Always allow your pet to know where you are at all times. Keep enough distance between you and your pet's mouth so they cannot turn around and bite you.
5. Tighten the loop, but not so tight that it interferes with their breathing ***(B)***.
6. Place the ends of the material down each side of the face and cross them under the chin. Then bring the ends behind the ears ***(C)***.
7. For cats and short-nosed dogs; take one end, pass it under the loop over the nose and tie it to the other end around the neck. For all other dogs, tie the ends in a bow behind the ears ***(D)***.

How To Make A Muzzle Out Of Anything:



Transporting

Moving an injured pet must be done with care to avoid making the problem worse or causing more pain. As a general rule of thumb, injured pets should not rest in your arms, as it is difficult for you not to jostle them or cause them breathing problems.

For more serious injuries

- Support your pet's back.
- Keep broken legs supported.
- For a chest injury, lay your pet with their injured lung down on the seat or transport board and their uninjured (or less injured) lung up to aid breathing.

Allow your pet to find their own most comfortable position.

Three Safest Ways To Transport Your Pet:

Carrier

Flat Board

Stretcher

TECHNIQUES

CPR

Only perform CPR if your pet is not breathing! **Do not attempt if your pet is conscious.** Follow the **ABC** order (**Airway**, **Breathing**, **Circulation**) when performing CPR.

A = Airway

- Lay your pet on their side. Open airway by gently extending head and neck out by pulling back on the chin until neck is straight.
- Open mouth and pull out tongue. Clear out debris if needed.

B= Breathing

- Use the following breathing rates:

20-30 BREATHS PER MINUTE 10-20 BREATHS PER MINUTE

- Hold your pet's mouth shut.
- Place your mouth over your pet's nose and forcefully blow just enough to make the chest rise.
- Repeat four or five times, then check to see if your pet begins to breathe on their own.

- If your pet is not breathing or breathing is shallow, continue assisted breathing for a maximum of 20 minutes.
- If there is no pulse or heart beat, perform chest compressions and alternate with breathing. Check for pulse after each set of compressions.

Blow through your mouth into your pet's nose.

C = Circulation

Performing Chest Compressions

Cat or Small Dog (under 30 lbs)

Place the palm of one of your hands over the ribs

1. Lay your pet down on their right side.
2. Kneel next to your pet with their chest facing you.
3. Place the palm of one of your hands over the ribs at the point where the elbow meets the chest.
4. Compress the chest one-third to one-half of the chest diameter, with your elbows softly locked. Do this 100-120 times per minute.
5. If two people are present, continue rescue breathing during compressions.
6. If this is not possible, alternate 30 chest compressions and two breaths. Check for pulse after two minutes.

Medium to Large Dog (30 - 90 lbs)

1. Lay your pet down to your right.
2. Stand or kneel behind your pet with your arms extended and your hands cupped.
3. Place your palms over the point on the chest behind the elbow.

Cup your hands and place palms over the ribs behind elbows

4. Compress the chest one-third to one-half of the chest diameter, with your elbows softly locked. Do this 100-120 times per minute.
5. If two people are present, continue rescue breathing during compressions.
6. If this is not possible, alternate 30 chest compressions and two breaths. Check for pulse after two minutes.

Extra-Large Dog (over 90 lbs)

1. Follow the same procedure as you would for a *Medium to Large* dog.
2. Do **10-15** compressions to **one** breath.

EMERGENCIES

Bites

Spider Bite/ Bee Sting

Symptoms:

- Pain
- Redness and swelling
- Itching and licking

Treatment:

- Remove stinger with a firm object. Do not attempt to pull it out with your fingers as you may release more venom.
- Apply sting relief pad and/or ice pack to reduce the swelling.
- If your pet has facial swelling or hives, seek veterinary help immediately. If your pet is vomiting or has difficulty breathing, these may be signs of anaphylactic shock (a severe allergic reaction). Seek veterinary help and prepare to perform CPR if heart stops. **See Shock on Page 17, CPR on Page 7.**

Snake Bite

Symptoms:

- Bleeding puncture wound
- Redness and swelling
- Pain
- Twitching and drooling
- Shock

Treatment:

- Try to identify the type of snake from a safe distance but do not try to capture the snake.
- Keep your pet calm and still.
- Do not try to suck out the venom, or cut open the wound.
- Do not apply ice or a tourniquet to the area.
- Flush wound with water.
- Check for signs of shock.
- Carry your pet to the car as movement will make the venom travel faster. Seek immediate veterinary help.

Bleeding

- Wear latex gloves, and hold a gauze pad over the bleeding site and apply direct pressure.
- If blood soaks through, add another layer of gauze without removing the first. Repeat as many times as needed until bleeding stops . Keep the compress in place with bandage material.
- If bleeding continues, continue to apply direct pressure to the wound and also do the following: For arterial (spurting) bleeding, hold the area just **above** the wound. For venous bleeding, hold the area just **below** the wound.
- If bleeding from a limb, elevate the limb above the heart and continue direct pressure.
- If holding above or below wound fails to stop bleeding, apply a pressure bandage by wrapping gauze or other soft material around the wound just tight enough to stop the bleeding. Secure with tape.
- If none of the techniques work, seek immediate veterinary help.

Bloat/Torsion

With bloat, the stomach fills with air or food often after a meal. Bloat may be closely followed by torsion, when the stomach turns around on itself cutting off the blood supply and resulting in life threatening shock.

	SYMPTOMS	TREATMENT
BLOAT/ TORSION	• Swollen abdomen • Drooling or salivation • Vomiting or retching • Restlessness and pacing • Shock	• Check for signs of shock and administer CPR if necessary. • Seek **immediate** veterinary help (especially if you suspect torsion)

Burns

- *First-degree burns* (mild) affect the top layer of skin and appear as angry red welts.
- *Second-degree burns* go deeper in the skin and may raise blisters.
- *Third-degree burns* should always be treated by a vet. These burns go through all layers of the skin and into the flesh underneath.

Treatment:

- Rinse area with cool water, removing any debris or chemicals.
- Do not use ointments, butter or petroleum jelly on burns.
- If more than one part of the body is burned do not immerse your pet. Run cold water over the areas and apply a non-stick sterile pad over the area.
- For serious burns or first and second degree burns covering a large area, seek immediate veterinary help.

Choking

Similar to people, if your pet starts choking they will gag, retch, and cough to try and expel the object.

Symptoms:

- Breathing difficulty
- Anxiety
- Gums may be white or blue

Treatment:

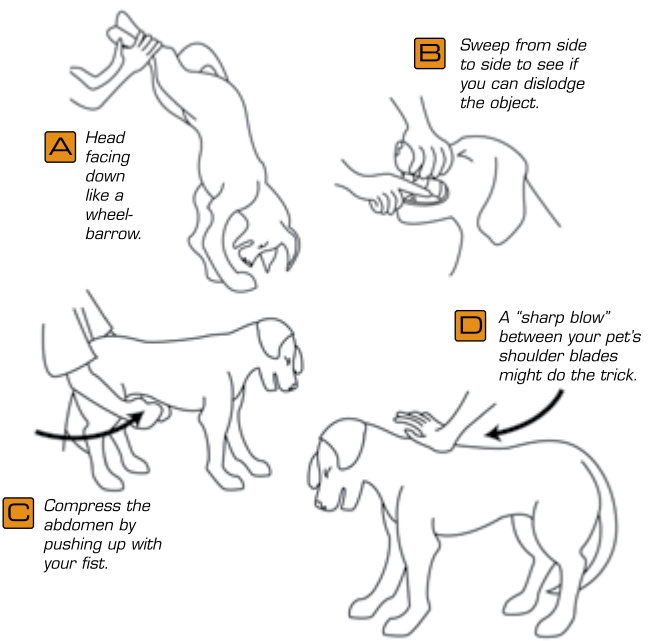
- Open your pet's mouth and sweep from side to side to see if you can dislodge the object ***(B)***. Be careful not to get bitten or push the object further into the throat. Be aware of a firm structure in the throat called the hyoid apparatus. Pulling on this could cause severe injury.
- Alternatively, lift your pet by the hind legs and hold them up vertically with the head facing down ***(A)***. This position may dislodge the object.

If the object does not come out by doing this, try the following:

- With your pet stand or lying down, place your arms around their waist.
- Close your fist and place it on the underside of your pet where the ribs end, just below their sternum ***(C)***.

- Compress the abdomen by pushing up with your fist five times in rapid succession (similar to the Heimlich Maneuver). Repeat two or three times in succession, sweeping the mouth to see if the object has become loose in between sets.
- If not successful, try administering a "sharp blow" with the palm of your hand between your pet's shoulder blades, then repeat the abdominal compressions ***(D)***.
- Sweep the mouth again and if the object hasn't loosened, seek immediate veterinary help. You should prepare to repeat the treatment again in the car, and be ready to administer artificial respiration if your pet stops breathing. **See CPR Page 7.**

Several Ways To Aid A Choking Animal:



Dehydration

Symptoms:

- Sunken eyes
- Pale or dry gums
- Weakness or lethargy

Treatment:

- Dogs and cats have loose skin at the *scruff* of their neck (from the top of their head to the base of neck) that is easy to grasp.
- To determine if your pet is dehydrated, pull up on the skin behind the neck. It should spring back to normal in less than one second. If not, your pet is dehydrated.
- If your pet is not vomiting, provide water and if conditions do not improve within a few hours or are accompanied by fever or low body temperature, seek immediate veterinary help.

Frostbite

Frostbite can be hard to recognize in your pet because of their fur. The most common sites of frostbite are the tail, tips of ears, and pads of the feet.

Symptoms:

- Lack of pain or sensation of the affected area
- Discoloration of the affected area
- Area may feel frozen
- Your pet may limp

Treatment:

- Start by taking your pet out of the cold.
- Gently and slowly warm the affected area, starting with cool water, and then progressing to warm water. Do not put pressure or rub the area.
- Seek veterinary help immediately as the affected area may have sustained permanent damage.

Heatstroke

Never leave your pet in a parked car in hot weather and watch for signs of overexertion.

Symptoms:

- Body temperature at 104° or above
- Excessive panting

- Inability to move
- Bright red tongue or gums
- Bloody diarrhea

Treatment:

- Remove your pet from the heat, and place in a cool area.
- Check your pet's temperature. See **Normal Temperatures Page 5.**
- Spray your pet with cool water, or place them in a cool bath. Retake their temperature. You can also try placing water soaked towels on their head, neck, feet, and/or abdomen.
- Repeat until normal temperature is restored and your pet is better hydrated. For details about administering the **Dehydration Test on your pet, see previous page**.
- Once a temperature of 104° is reached, stop the cooling process and seek immediate veterinary help. Many consequences of heatstroke won't show up for a few days. If a temperature of 104° is not reached in 10-15 minutes, seek **immediate** veterinarian help.

Hypothermia

Hypothermia is a drastic reduction in body temperature which can lead to serious health problems.

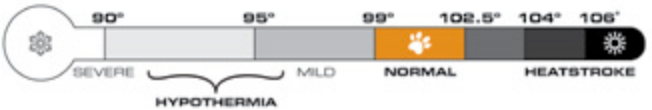
Symptoms:

- Temperatures below 100°F
- Shivering
- Weak pulse
- Pale or blue gums

Treatment:

- Get your pet indoors and take their temperature. See **Normal Temperatures, Page 5**.
- Wrap your pet in warm blankets or emergency blanket. Apply warm water bottles next to your pet, on top of the blankets.
- Check for signs of shock.
- Recheck your pet's temperature from time to time until normal temperature is reached.
- See your veterinarian as soon as possible.
- If you are not successful in restoring your pet's temperature back to normal, seek **immediate** veterinary help.

What Your Pet's Body Temperature Suggests:



Injury

Injuries can range from sprains and strains, to more severe injuries such as a leg fracture or dislocation of the joint. Start by calming down your pet to try and diagnose the injury.

Sprains & Strains

An injury to the muscle.

Symptoms:

- Limping
- Swelling
- Pain

Treatment:

- With your pet lying down, cover the injured limb with a towel and apply an ice pack on top.
- Do this 3-4 times daily, for 5-15 minutes at a time. After the first 24 hours, switch from icing the injury to warm compresses. Apply as with the ice pack.
- Do not resume exercise or activity until the injury heals.
- If there is no improvement or the injury worsens over 24 hours, seek immediate veterinary help.

Bone Fractures

A break in the bone.

Symptoms:

- Pain
- Disfigurement and/or bone sticking through the skin
- Lameness
- Swelling

Treatment:

- For all fractures, watch for shock and administer CPR as needed. For more information on **Shock see Page 17** and **CPR Page 7.**

- Keep your pet calm.
- Loosely cover the wound with sterile gauze or pad and loosely tape.
- Avoid splinting unless properly trained.
- Seek immediate veterinary help.

Joint Dislocation

The two most common joints to be dislocated (bone out of joint) are your pet's elbows and hips.

Symptoms:

- Pain when affected area is touched
- Foot does not reach the ground
- If hip is affected: the dislocated hind leg may be shorter or longer than the other
- If elbow is affected: the dislocated elbow may be bent and lower leg may be pointed towards or away from the body

Treatment:

- Check your pet for signs of shock, and administer CPR if needed.
- Avoid splinting unless properly trained.
- Seek your veterinarian as soon as possible.

Poisoning

First, please call your veterinarian or the ***Pet Poison Helpline*** **at (855) 764-7661** for information about the specific poison involved. If you know what the poison was, take the vomit, poison or container it was in to the veterinarian with you.

Ingested Poisons Treatment:

- Call your veterinarian immediately and do not induce vomiting unless told to do so.

Inhaled Poisons Treatment:

- Get your pet into fresh air immediately.
- Watch for shock and administer CPR if needed. For information on **Shock see the next page** and for **CPR see Page 7**.

Topical Poisons Treatment:

- Quickly identify the topical toxin. For water-based toxins, use a mild dish washing liquid and rinse

thoroughly. Repeat as necessary until all of the topical poison is removed. For oil-based toxins, first apply butter, peanut butter, mayonnaise, or mechanic's hand degreaser. Then bathe with mild dish washing soap as above.
- If the poison is in the eye, flush with water or sterile eyewash.
- If the poison is a powder, dust or vacuum it off.

Shock

Shock is a life-threatening condition that occurs when the body doesn't get enough oxygen. There are three stages of shock, listed below:

Mild Shock Symptoms:
- Low body temperature. See **Body Temperature Rates Page 15**
- Increased heart rate and pulse. See **Normal Heart Rates Page 4**
- Gums may look dark pink or red

Severe Shock Symptoms:
- Hypothermia (low body temperature)
- Even more increased heart rate, but a weaker pulse
- Gums may look white
- Cool limbs

Terminal Shock Symptoms:
- Slow heart rate. See **Normal Breathing Rates Page 5**
- Semiconsciousness or unconsciousness
- Weak or absent pulse

Shock Treatment:
- If your pet is bleeding, see **Bleeding Page 10**
- Administer CPR if needed.
- Wrap your pet in a thermal blanket or towel.
- Seek immediate veterinary help. Shock can be fatal.

Traumatic Injury

Always seek **immediate** veterinary help for a traumatic injury.

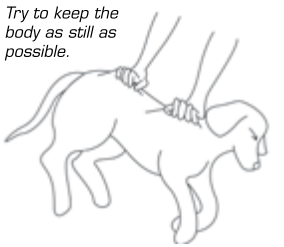
Broken Back Symptoms:
- Severe pain
- Inability to move
- Obvious spinal deformity
- Open anus
- Dribbling urine or feces

Broken Back Treatment:

- Try to calm your pet to stabilize breathing.
- If your pet is unconscious, administer CPR as needed. **See CPR Page 7.**
- Place a rigid board or hard plastic surface on it's side along the back of your pet.
- Slide the board under your pet keeping them as still as possible.
- Wrap the board and your pet with sheets or blankets.
- Wrap tape, cloth or rope around the board and your pet to keep them tight and secure.
- Seek **immediate** veterinary help.

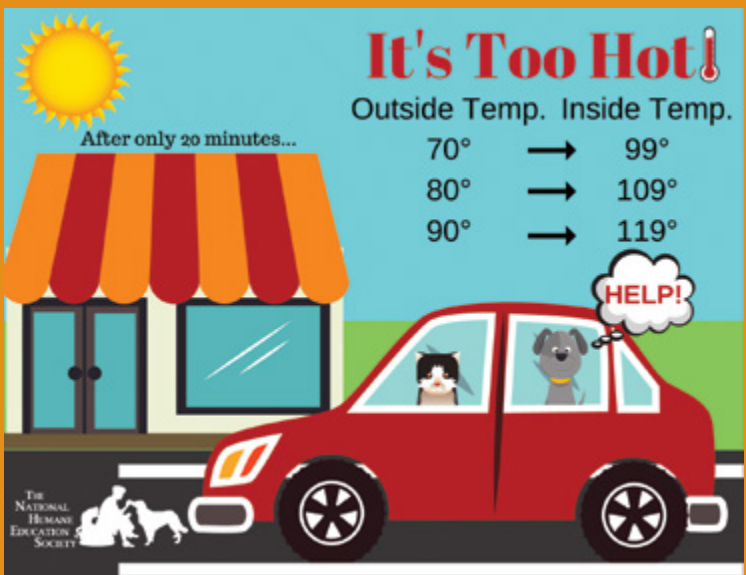
Car Accident

- If you witnessed the event, try to make a mental note of where your pet was hit, and whether your pet was simply hit, thrown or driven over.
- Carefully approach the scene of the accident.
- Alert oncoming traffic by waving your hands or a towel.
- If traffic has not stopped, carefully move your pet to the side of the road by dragging your pet by the fur on the top of the body, trying to keep the body as still as possible. Your pet may be scared or in pain, use a muzzle if needed to stay safe. See **Makeshift Muzzle on Page 6.**



Try to keep the body as still as possible.

- Check your pet's vital signs; breathing, heartbeat, and pulse. Administer CPR as needed.
- Note the following important information for the veterinarian: position of your pet; presence of blood, urine or feces.
- If your pet cannot move, follow first aid instructions for **Broken Back** above, to transport.
- Check for open wounds and damage to the limbs. If your pet can stand, note if they are limping or favoring one side.
- If your pet is bleeding, see first aid instructions for **Bleeding on Page 10.**
- Check for signs of shock. See **Shock on Page 17.**
- Seek **immediate** veterinary help. Some traumatic injuries don't present themselves until 48-72 hours after an accident.



NEVER leave an animal alone in a hot car. If you see an animal in a hot car, contact animal control immediately.

SUMMER CARE TIPS

Remember S-H-A-D-E !

As you enjoy the summer with your companion animals, please **remember S-H-A-D-E** to help keep them safe:

- **S**TAY **H**YDRATED! Make sure they have access to fresh, cool water.
- **A**LWAYS keep an eye on how they are feeling. Excessive panting is one of the signs of heatstroke. (Brachycephalic canines, like French Bulldogs, are highly susceptible to overheating.)

  If you believe they are overheating, move them to a cool area and place them on towels soaked with cool water. Monitor their breathing and seek veterinary help if their condition worsens.
- **D**ON'T leave them alone in a parked vehicle. Cats and dogs do not sweat. Even a vehicle parked in the shade, with the windows cracked, can reach dangerous temperatures in ten minutes.
- **E**XERCISE and play during the cooler parts of the day and for short periods. Check the pavement with your hand to make sure it isn't too hot.

WINTER CARE TIPS

To ensure a safe and happy winter season for everyone, here are some helpful tips to follow:

Before you start your car, please remember to **knock on the hood of your vehicle**.

Stray cats often curl up in wheel wells or under car hoods in the colder months, especially if the engine is still warm. Starting a car while an animal is under the hood can cause serious injury or death to the animal.

Use animal-safe rock salt for your sidewalks and driveways, **as regular rock salt is toxic to animals**. Do you use antifreeze in your vehicles? Make sure that animals cannot reach antifreeze containers and that any spills are cleaned up quickly and thoroughly. Antifreeze gives off a sweet scent which attracts animals, but it is very deadly to them. If you suspect your companion animal has ingested antifreeze please take him/her to your vet immediately.

Playing in the snow or going for a walk in a winter wonderland can be very fun for you and your dog. Protect them from any risk of developing hypothermia or frostbite by limiting their exposure to freezing temperatures and supervising them while outdoors.

Thank you for helping to create a more humane world!

For other tips, go to **nhes.org.**

FIELD NOTES

Thank you for all you do for the animals.

THE NATIONAL HUMANE EDUCATION SOCIETY

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EMERGENCY INFORMATION

Pet's Name: .....
Your Name: .....
Address: .....
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Phone Number: .....

Veterinarian: .....
Address: .....
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Phone Number: .....
Allergies: .....
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Other Notes: .....
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PET POISON HELPLINE

1-855-764-7661

To report animal abuse, contact your local animal control office or law enforcement agency.