

Putting Together a First Aid Kit for Your Birds

Avian First Aid Kit

- stockinette
- neck brace
- splints
- cotton swabs
- alcohol swabs
- 1" gauze tape
- vet wrap
- penlight
- metal nail file
- tweezers or hemostats
- small scissors
- clean dish towels
- rubber gloves
- sterile surgical blade
- 1cc tuberculin syringes
- 12cc curved tip syringes
- flexible tubing
- a net
- sterile saline solution
- Pedialyte
- Betadine
- Clotisol
- Neosporin ointment
- Pepto-Bismol
- Benadryl (pink kapseals)
- stethoscope

Put everything in an airtight container

The equipment in your first aid kit is meant to be used to stabilize a bird prior to transportation to your avian veterinarian. It is not meant to replace veterinary care. If at all possible, in the event of an emergency, first, contact your avian vet to inform the staff that you will be bringing in your bird, ask for specific information on how to handle your particular emergency, then follow your vet's instructions.

During a regular office visit, BRING YOUR FIRST AID KIT IN TO YOUR AVIAN VET so that he or she may show you how to use the supplies. Also ask if there is anything else that your particular bird may require in the event of an emergency. (Injectable or oral calcium, etc.)

Petiatic provides some first aid essentials such as syringes, scales, nebulizers and thermometers: everything you wish you had invested in BEFORE an emergency or sickness occurred. You can find them on the web at petiatic.com

How To Use Your FIRST AID KIT

Hemostat: Can be used to pull a broken, bleeding blood feather. Please NOTE: a bird with a bleeding disorder, liver disease or infection may not clot properly and may bleed to death from a follicle after a blood feather has been plucked. If at all possible, have an experienced avian veterinarian remove a bleeding feather. To remove a feather, grab the bleeding feather at the base and, holding the wing steady, use firm, smooth pulling to remove the feather from the follicle.

If a clot forms, be careful not to dislodge it. If the bleeding does not stop, use the Clotisol applied sparingly with a cotton-tipped applicator, to the follicle, then apply pressure. This should stop the bleeding. If it does not stop within a few minutes, apply pressure with a sterile gauze pad and go immediately to your avian veterinarian.

Tweezers: May be used to remove feathers, splinters, or to remove a tick.

Stockinette: Looks like sock material, can be used by placing a bird into it to keep it from thrashing, and to keep the wings close to the body. The bird can breathe through the material, if necessary.

Neck Brace: Foam in a circle. Used to keep a bird from chewing feathers or mutilating flesh. Cut to length to prevent a bird from bending neck down to bite skin or feathers, then tape. Make sure it can access food and water with neck brace in place.

Splints: Tongue depressors and small round sticks can be used to help stabilize a fractured wing or leg by incorporating the splint into the tape for transportation to the vet clinic.

Sterile lubricant: To be used as directed by your vet to cover an open wound (to keep it moist and prevent infection.)

Ointments: *Povidone iodine* and *triple antibiotics* are to be used only as directed by your vet. Ointments are not usually recommended for birds as oil may coat the feathers and decrease their insulating qualities, but may be used to cover a constricted toe that will be bandaged.

Povidone iodine swabs: To dab onto the umbilicus of a newly hatched baby bird. May be used to clean and treat a wound, as directed by your avian veterinarian.

Sterile cotton-tipped applicators: May be used to swab a wound or lesion for culturing (swab should only touch the area to be cultured, then carefully replaced in the sterile packaging for immediate transportation to your avian vet.)

Band-aids: For those bitten human fingers when trying to restrain a wiggly, injured or ill bird. Can also be used to secure neck brace or cover a wound.

Penlight: To illuminate injured area, check eyes, nares, oropharynx (mouth area), beak, and feathers.

Pen: It is suggested you write down a list of important phone numbers and tape them to the lid or keep inside the first aid box. Be sure and include your avian vet's phone number, emergency clinic phone numbers, animal poison control hotline number, contact number of a relative and any other important numbers.

National Animal Poison Control Hotlines:

1-800-548-2423 - \$30 per case

or 1-900-680-0000 - \$20 first 5 minutes, plus \$2.95 per additional minute

Antiseptic towelettes: To disinfect hands.

Alcohol swabs: To clean unbroken skin.

Rubber gloves: To prevent contact with infected material or open wounds. Can be filled with hot water and tied off to act as a hot water bottle. Hand-cradle the bird to keep warm during transportation to the vet's.

Sterile surgical blade: To be used as directed by your avian vet. Can cut fibers tied around the toes, etc.

Sterile saline: Can be used to flush wounds, to moisten a sterile dressing, to flush the nares (if a seed hull is lodged, for example), to flush the crop, to flush the eye, etc. Your veterinarian may advise you on specific uses for sterile saline.

Syringes (sterile): For administering medication, feeding an adult or baby bird, flushing a wound, etc.

Paper toweling: For catching a bird quickly, for cleaning up.

Latex tubing: To be used as directed by your avian veterinarian, to insert into the crop to administer medications, hand-feeding formula, to flush out a crop that won't empty in a baby bird, to flush cool water into a crop immediately after a crop burn is discovered. **If you are not familiar with the procedures,**

please discuss them with your vet BEFORE you have an emergency so that you may learn the proper techniques.

Veterinary blood clotting gel (Clotisol) This liquid, when applied to a minor wound, feather follicle, bleeding toenail or beak, will quickly and safely stop bleeding. It is safer and less caustic than clotting powders or sticks, and may be applied with enclosed cotton-tipped applicators. Avoid getting on mucus membranes (eye or lid, mouth or cloaca). Moisten the applicator and apply firm pressure to the bleeding for several seconds to stop the bleeding. Reapply if necessary. Serious bleeding or deep wounds should be cared for by your avian veterinarian only. Until you can get to your vet, use a sterile dressing and apply direct pressure to the bleeding area. If a beak or toenail is split, or broken far back, if clotting gel does not stop bleeding, apply ice to the nail or beak and take the bird immediately to your avian veterinarian.

Scissors: Can be used to cut tape, feathers, fibers wrapped around a toe, etc.

IN EMERGENCIES, *REMAIN CALM*. Gently restrain your bird in a towel or paper towel to examine it. Use the penlight. Stop any serious bleeding with pressure and a sterile gauze, or use clotting gel. If there are obvious fractures (broken bones), wrap the bird in a stockinette to prevent the wings from flapping, or apply a splint to keep broken bones from causing more tissue damage. Keep an injured bird warm by transporting in on a heating pad, hot water bottle or with a towel, to minimize visual stimuli and make sure the bird is secured and cannot escape.

To safely transport your bird to the vet, remember these three things:

1. warmth
2. darkness
3. carrier

Birds that have ingested or inhaled a poison (plant, household chemical, etc), those that have fallen into a sink, commode, or swimming pool, those that have bitten a cord and have received a shock, birds that have been stepped on, closed in a door, hit a ceiling fan or window, those bitten by another house pet (cat, dog, ferret, etc.), those receiving a burn, those acting sick (fluffed up, weak, not vocalizing, coughing sneezing, having a nasal discharge or diarrhea, those not eating well, sleeping more than usual, or having any swellings, limps, bumps, or sores, should all be taken immediately to an avian veterinarian.

It is best to establish a relationship with an avian vet **PRIOR** to having an emergency. Find out how many birds the vet sees in a week and if they attend avian continuing education courses. Also find out how many vets in the practice will see birds. Find out if they do their own emergencies, or if they refer them elsewhere. If they are referred, find out if there are avian vets on staff. If you are fortunate, you may be able to use a Board Certified Avian Specialist. Only vets that have taken and passed a very difficult exam offered by the American Board of Veterinary Practitioners can call themselves avian specialists. Make an appointment for a “well-bird” exam for your pet birds so that you can establish with an avian vet who will then know you and your bird. Allow your vet to perform recommended tests, as it is impossible to ascertain the health of a bird simply by looking at it.

Hopefully, you will never need to use the supplies contained in your first aid kit, but it is nice to know that you have it!

And remember, if you do use the supplies, be sure to restock.