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RECOVER Releases First Evidence- and Consensus-Based First Aid Guidelines for Dogs and Cats

New guidelines help veterinary teams teach dog and cat owners, first responders, and paraprofessionals how to recognize potentially life-threatening emergencies in small animals in the prehospital setting and provide potentially life-saving first aid before seeking veterinary care.

Chicago, IL — August 25, 2026 — The RECOVER Initiative has released the 2026 RECOVER First Aid Guidelines, the first evidence- and consensus-based first aid guidelines for dogs and cats developed through a systematic, transparent evaluation process.

The guidelines are designed to help veterinary professionals provide clear, practical guidance to pet owners, professional dog handlers, and other animal paraprofessionals in the prehospital setting: the critical period after an emergency is recognized and before veterinary care is available. They do not replace veterinary diagnosis or treatment. Instead, they help people recognize emergencies, provide appropriate immediate support, and get animals to veterinary professionals with the best chance for recovery.

The 2026 RECOVER First Aid Guidelines include recommendations for urgent conditions such as heatstroke, choking, burns, noncaustic toxin ingestion, hypoglycemia, severe extremity bleeding, and other emergency situations where timely action before arrival at a veterinary facility may meaningfully impact outcome. The guidelines also include First Aid Recognize and Act Algorithms and instructional figures that veterinary teams can use when teaching first aid concepts to pet owners, first responders, shelters, groomers, boarding facilities, trainers, and other animal caregivers.

“Animal emergencies often begin before a patient reaches a veterinary hospital,” said Jamie Burkitt, DVM, DACVECC, Guidelines Co-Chair of The RECOVER Initiative and Professor of Clinical Small Animal Emergency and Critical Care at the Weill School of Veterinary Medicine, University of California, Davis. “These guidelines give veterinary teams a rigorous, practical framework to help people recognize urgent problems, provide appropriate first aid, and get dogs and cats to veterinary care with the best chances for a good outcome.”

The guidelines were developed through the RECOVER process, using prioritized clinical questions, systematic literature searches, evidence synthesis, assessment of evidence quality,

expert consensus, and an international commenting period for veterinary professionals. A total of 16 PICO questions were addressed, resulting in 50 treatment recommendations for first aid in dogs and cats.

“RECOVER exists to empower people to provide lifesaving care to animals through education, science, and community,” said Daniel J. Fletcher, PhD, DVM, DACVECC, President of The RECOVER Initiative. “The First Aid Guidelines extend that mission beyond the hospital by giving veterinary teams and animal caregivers evidence-informed guidance they can use when minutes matter, while keeping animals moving toward the veterinary care they need.”

The 2026 RECOVER First Aid Guidelines are available at <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/toc/14764431/36/S1>.

RECOVER will also offer a First Aid course designed to help veterinary professionals, pet owners, animal handlers, shelters, boarding facilities, groomers, trainers, first responders, and other animal caregivers apply the guidelines in real-world emergency situations in the future.

RECOVER extends its gratitude to the guideline authors, evidence evaluators, reviewers, committee members, contributors, and staff members whose work made these guidelines possible.

About the RECOVER Initiative:

The RECOVER Initiative is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and global leader in evidence-based veterinary CPR guidelines and training. Since 2010, RECOVER has empowered veterinary professionals, pet professionals, and pet owners worldwide through education, science, and community. With a network of over 497 Certified Instructors, 37,000 Certified Rescuers, and 108,000 course learners, RECOVER sets global standards in veterinary lifesaving care. For more information and to access the RECOVER First Aid Guidelines, visit [The RECOVER Initiative website](#).

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