

WINTER 2009

COMPLIMENTARY

DOG DAYS IN L.A. MAGAZINE

Breed Spotlight:
POMERANIANS!

Dogs in History:
Saviors of the Swiss Alps

LA's Angels:
Hospital Therapy Dogs

Interview:
**LA Animal
Services'**
Kathy Davis

First Aid:
Choking

Dealing with
Obesity

Training Tips:
'Sit' Command



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The Cure for Dragon Breath

Recession Gotcha By The Tail? Ask About Discounts

DENISE FLECK Help Your Choking Canine

PET FIRST AID



IT WAS A PICTURE-PERFECT THANKSGIVING IN THOMASVILLE, Pennsylvania. A patchwork of red, orange and gold leaves blanketed the ground while a smattering of green still clung to the branches above. The house was filled with idle chatter while all anxiously awaited the Holiday Meal. Suddenly Brutus, a 90-pound Rottweiler, entered the room with an unsteady gait. Unable to breathe and making a ghastly assortment of noises, the dog was in grave distress while the humans nearby froze in a panic. Fortunately for Brutus, Animal Communicator Terri Steuben was on the scene and could sense the true emergency at hand. She quickly hugged the large dog around his abdomen and gave a quick thrust. Nothing happened, so Terri tried again, and this time a chunk of dog food literally flew out of Brutus' mouth and across the floor. The grateful Rottie, whose breathing returned to normal, began licking Terri's face if to say a great big canine "thank you," while Terri herself breathed an enormous sigh of relief.

Accidents occur suddenly and without warning, so knowing what to do during those first few moments can truly make a difference. According to Dr. Karen Halligan, Director of Medical Services at the Los Angeles SPCA, "In an emergency, the best thing you can do for your pet is to be prepared, stay calm and make quick decisions." If your dog is destructive with toys, gobbles his food like Brutus or consumes everything in sight, you must maintain supervision and pet-proof your home. "Dog Grandma," Milly Urbanski of Shadow Hills, California attests that, "My human kids had to put a child-proof lock on the refrigerator to keep their yellow Labrador retriever safe. I was dog-sitting one morning, and the minute my daughter and her husband left for work, the mischievous pooch ran to the fridge, grabbed the bottom corner and flung the door open hoping to enjoy a buffet."

Anything in reach and smaller than your pet's mouth is fair game including paper clips, thumbtacks, rubber bands, buttons and staples. To be a responsible pet parent, you must get down on all fours and look at your house and yard from your pet's point of view. What do you see? Cords of all kinds (telephone, electrical, drapery and blinds) can strangle or electrocute your dog; enticing smells can lure him where he doesn't belong and small objects on the floor can poison, choke or create blockages in your pet's stomach.

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IF YOUR DOG IS CHOKING

Initially, give him a few moments to perform a cough, which may expel the object, but if it does not, a careful sweep of the mouth with your fingers to dislodge the object is recommended. Always look at what you're doing though – don't blindly reach into your pet's mouth or you could push the object further down, tear throat tissue or even get bitten. If your attempt is not successful, try one of these techniques:

1. Doggie Heimlich—Stand behind your dog and place your arms around his waist keeping his head lower than his stomach. Close your hands together to make a fist and place your fist just behind the last rib in the soft part of the tummy. Compress the abdomen by pulling up in a quick and rapid manner similar to the technique commonly performed on humans. This method does have the potential of bruising internal organs, and since canine ribs are more flexible than human ones, it doesn't



Pamela Marks: Paw Prince Studios

Denise Fleck demonstrates the Heimlich technique to her class.

always create enough pressure to expel the object, so you may then try...

2. Chest Thrusts—Place your hands flat on each side of your pet's chest and squeeze inward, pushing with your shoulders and elbows to squeeze the lungs. After two thrusts, give the animal a moment to cough and/or look in his mouth to see if the object is now reachable. If not, repeat.

Techniques like these are best learned in a Pet First-Aid & CPR Class where you can gain the confidence and skill to perform them properly. Visit www.sunnydogink.com for a class near you. 🐾

Denise Fleck is a freelance writer and animal care instructor specializing in Pet First-Aid and CPR. She makes frequent appearances on KTLA's Morning News and has demonstrated Pet CPR skills on Animal Planet's Groomer Has It, Lassie's Pet Vet and CNN Headline News. Denise has developed her own line of Pet First-Aid Kits and is currently owned by three rescue dogs.



Dr. Jeff Werber, DVM
with one of his celebrity patients, "Lassie!"

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