

Information sheet, lifting and transporting pets

Lifting patients with injuries or wounds



Don't try to support an injured leg. If you try to support the injury you are far more likely to hurt than to help. Have any injured limb positioned away from your body and just let it dangle. Lower the pet slowly to the floor, giving plenty of time for the other limbs to take the weight. If there is a wound under the abdomen, support the pelvis with an arm under the back end under the tail to avoid putting pressure on the wound. It is often useful to gently but firmly take a cat by the scruff (this is NOT the same as holding it around the neck!!). You can take most of the weight with the other hand under the cat's tummy or under its back end. This technique gives you good control of the cat, letting you move it efficiently, and keeps the teeth away from your fingers! Be careful not to get bitten.



Consider using a muzzle. These are available for cats as well as dogs. Remember that even the gentlest of pets can act out of character if they are in pain. Also look after your back when lifting heavier pets; keep your head looking up, and use your legs rather than your back to give the power for the lifting. Your pet needs you at home, not in hospital yourself!

Supporting dogs with slings



Slings are useful as an aid to rising, and to prevent mishaps/slips early in the post-operative period after limb surgery or when they are wobbly on their feet after spinal problems. You can buy dedicated slings, but perfectly adequate ones can be improvised. A broad

leather belt makes a good sling. This could be wrapped in towelling if comfort is an issue, but this is often not necessary. One of our clients improvised a magnificent sling from an IKEA bag! These bags are very strong and the tape handles are ideal. A standard harness from a pet shop makes a good lifting/support aid for the front end of a pet after forelimb injuries or neck surgery.



Contact with other animals

Keep your pet at a healthy distance from other animals when taking them out for toilet breaks and even when waiting for appointments in the vet's waiting room. Always use a lead, even if your dog is well behaved. Please keep dogs away from cats. Even if the cats are in baskets as they should be, it is going to freak the cat out to have a German Shepherd dog dribbling in at the window! The cat doesn't know that the dog only wants to be friendly!

The last thing that an injured patient needs is excitement or kerfuffle!

Transporting cats



Always use a carrier to constrain the cat's freedom. This is important for safety in the car, to prevent escapes between the car and the waiting room, and to avoid conflict between your pet and others that might be in the waiting room at the same time as yours. It can be very dangerous to transport cats free in cars; think what would happen if they panic and dive for the darkest place which is probably by the driver's feet, under the brake pedal ...

A good way to load unwilling cats is turn the box so that the open end is facing upwards with the door open. Holding the cat with the scruff technique described above, lower the cat into the box, rear end first. Gently return the box to its normal orientation, straighten any bedding and secure the door.



Some designs of cat baskets are better than others. Some baskets have top access as well as front access. This is useful, but the carry handle is on the lid, and if the lid isn't secured properly the lid will open as soon as you try to lift the basket. Some designs can allow the bottom to easily drop off when the carrier is lifted! A good tip to prevent this is to take a belt and to secure it tightly around the middle of the cage, passing the belt through the carry handle on the top so that it can't slip off. If some of the plastic clips to hold the halves together or to hold the door on, the cage can easily be repaired with string or with cable ties. Cable ties are very strong, and very cheap from DIY stores etc. Wicker pet carriers often benefit from reinforcing the support for the front door of the cage with cable ties. Otherwise an enthusiastic cat can sometimes manage to squeeze out. If you haven't got access to a proper pet carrier at least use a strong cardboard box secured with parcel tape etc, with ventilation holes punched in the card board with a pencil.

Transporting dogs in cars

Dogs are best transported in the rear end of a hatch-back type car in a secure area like a cage. If transporting them on the back seat of a saloon, beware of the risk of them ending up in the foot-well if you brake suddenly! Anticipating this eventuality by filling the space of the foot-well with an old duvet etc is a good idea. Consider the use of pet seat belts.



When loading the dog, open doors in advance and have good control of the dog while still well away from the car if the dog is inclined to leap in. If the dog is too big for you to lift straight in, then a staged lift is a useful method. First get the front legs up onto the edge of the car. Then lift the back end up. This way you only have to deal with half of the weight of the dog at any one time. A second person to help is pretty much essential to keep the front legs where you want them while you shift your attention to lifting the back end. Ramps are OK, but a bit cumbersome and you need to be careful that the dog doesn't decide to turn left/right and jump off the side of them!

When getting the dog out of the car, make sure someone inside the car has control of the dog with a lead/collar/harness before the door is opened and they have the chance to leap out. This is especially necessary for dogs that are used to being able to excitedly dive out of the back of a hatchback etc when they are taken out for a walk. When getting a dog out of a car, using a standard harness gives you a "handle" to help support the front end and absorb most of the impact as the dog leaves the vehicle and drops to the floor.

For further advice please contact us by phone on 07944 105501 or at mail@wm-referrals.com