



# Dawson Creek Veterinary Clinic

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[www.dcvet.ca](http://www.dcvet.ca)

## Wound care

### Wound Care Requires Prompt First Aid

It is not uncommon for a pet owner to be confronted with a wounded pet at some time. Wounds can be classified as either open (i.e. a break in the skin) or closed. First aid for the management of any open wound involves two steps:

#### Stop the bleeding

If an open wound is bleeding, the first priority is to control it. Before attempting to do anything, be sure the animal is properly restrained and, if necessary, apply a muzzle. To stop bleeding, apply direct pressure to the wound using a sterile or clean gauze sponge or cloth. When applying pressure, do not keep lifting the gauze to see if the bleeding has stopped. This only disrupts the clot that may have formed. Likewise, if blood soaks through the gauze, do not discard the soaked bandage since it contains important clotting factors. Instead, keep adding more bandage material on top of the soaked bandage. If possible, elevate the wound.

For severe bleeding, it may be necessary to apply direct pressure to the arteries that supply the affected area. These pressure points are located at the upper inside (armpit) of the front legs, the upper inside of the hind legs and the underside of the tail. The use of a tourniquet should be avoided. However, if a tourniquet is to be used, it must be used only as a last resort and then only if it is loosened every few minutes to restore blood circulation.

#### Prevent wound contamination

A clean, protective dressing should be applied to open wounds whenever possible to prevent infection and contamination. Never use cotton batting directly on an open wound, since the fibres will contaminate the wound.

If the wound is minor and superficial, gently cleanse it with ordinary soap and water. Try to clip back the hairs with a pair of scissors, being careful not to cut the skin accidentally. Apply an antiseptic or antibiotic ointment (e.g. Polysporin®), followed by a snug dressing. Be careful not to restrict the circulation by making the bandage too tight. If a wound is major and deep, do not probe or clean it, but simply apply a dressing and contact your veterinarian. As a rule, cats and dogs do not require tetanus shots.

For bite wounds, clip back the hairs away from the puncture sites with scissors and then thoroughly wash the wound with copious amounts of soap and water. Three per cent hydrogen peroxide may also be used after washing.

It is wise to have all bite wounds examined by a veterinarian, no matter how minor they appear. Very often, there may be more extensive damage to the tissues under the skin that is not immediately evident. Most, if not all, pets with open wounds and bite wounds also require antibiotics to prevent infection.