

Animal first aid puts pet owners on the front foot

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Across the state there are more than 4 million pets being kept by West Australian families, with nearly half a million cats and dogs. Credit: Lindsey Turner

Learning CPR could be the difference between life and death for your pet, as Perth continues to sweat through one of the hottest summers on record.

The [high temperatures](#) increase the risk of life threatening illness and

injuries for our beloved pups and felines, including from [heat stroke](#), dehydration and even snake-bite in addition to [allergic reactions](#) and [anaphylactic shock](#).

To help pet owners become effective first-responders, the Murdoch University Veterinary Hospital (MUVH) recently introduced a general first aid course for pets which will teach owners life-saving techniques.

Vets are advising pet owners to learn how to administer a range of techniques on animals, including cardiopulmonary cerebral resuscitation (CPCR), MUVH Dr Jill Griffiths says.

"We explain to pet owners how they can recognise early signs of illness before their pets reach a critical stage," she says.

"That allows us to treat them in a better condition which increases the chance of survival."

In addition to the CPR practice session the MUVH pet first aid course also provides demonstrations on how to perform bandaging in the event of arterial bleeding and how to apply splints for a broken leg.

A key part of the training is teaching [pet owners](#) how to recognise what is a potentially life threatening situation, such as a snake bite.

This includes how to conduct a thorough examination of their pets, including checking for gum colour, pulse, checking the heart and abdomen and knowing how to detect pain responses in their pets.

Snake venom carries a range of toxins that damage tissues and impair many of the body's vital functions.

Venom is rapidly absorbed from the site of the bite and carried mainly

by the lymphatic system into the animal's circulation, attacking the nervous system and interfering with the body's clotting mechanisms.

Common symptoms of snakebite include sudden weakness followed by collapse, shaking or twitching of the muscles and vomiting.

"We spend a lot of time explaining how to recognise an acute or emergency problem and appropriately assess the urgency of the situation. Animals of course, can't tell us how much pain they're in," says Dr Griffiths.

Across the state there are more than 4 million pets being kept by West Australian families, with nearly half a million cats and dogs.

The clinic sees at least two deaths per week that could be prevented by early intervention, Dr Griffin says.

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