



GENERAL TREATMENT PRINCIPLES AND WHEN TO GET HELP

FACT SHEET

You may need to make decisions when assessing and managing an illness or injury.



The decision whether to assess and manage an illness or an injury yourself, or whether to seek veterinary assistance and treatment, should be based on factors such as:

- how significant the injury or illness is;
- consideration for the welfare of your greyhound;
- how confident you are in knowing what the illness or injury is;
- how confident are you in correcting treating and managing the condition;
- your understanding of the likely and potential complications of undertaking the treatment yourself.

There are obvious injuries and illnesses that require immediate veterinary consultation and assessment including:

- vomiting;
- diarrhoea;
- lack of appetite;
- excessive water intake;

- excessive or difficult urination;
- stiffness and dehydration;
- fever;
- severe or leg carrying lameness;
- significant swelling and/or deformity of a limb;
- any suspected fracture;
- large lacerations (> 1cm);
- any dog fight wound.

Many skin lacerations require veterinary assessment with most requiring immediate first-aid and follow up treatment as well. First aid can be given by you, but if the wound does not heal or begins to show any of the following, **you should seek veterinary attention immediately:**

- swelling;
- heat around the site of the wound;
- pus or oozing;
- bleeding does not stop;
- temperature and/ or lethargy and guarding of a wound

Most lacerations are best treated immediately rather than being left for 2-3 days to reduce the risk of infection and improve the success of surgery if the decision is made to stitch/ suture the wound.

Many injuries and illnesses need to be assessed by your usual veterinarian within one to three days of the signs becoming obvious. These include:

- coughs;
- eye discharge;
- skin conditions;
- muscle tears;
- mild swelling;
- bruising;
- mild muscle soreness; and
- any mild lameness.

recurrent lameness should raise suspicion of an inadequately healed/recurring injury that warrants investigation. If in doubt, always consult with a veterinarian on the best way forward.

TREATMENT PRINCIPLES

If an injury is **suspected** then there are some general treatment principles that need to be considered - **Rest, Ice, Compression and Elevation (RICE)**. However, elevation is impractical in many instances.

REST

- Rest is important as it lessens stress on the injured area. You may need to apply strict rest for a period of time, depending upon the type and severity of the injury.
- Different amounts of rest are required for different injuries and level of severity of the injury, for example:
- for a muscle strain lead-controlled exercise for 5-10 days may be required;
- for a fractured hock being managed conservatively in a splint or cast, the greyhound may be confined to its kennel and only out on lead to empty for the first 3-6 weeks; and
- for shin-soreness, lead work only for 2-3 weeks as part of a treatment program is often required.
- Failing to rest places strain on the injured part of the body and can lead to worsening the injury or even result in an injury that ends your greyhound's racing career. For example, hard walking and free running or trialing a greyhound with a ruptured back muscle can lead to additional injury and increased bleeding, swelling and pain.
- Continuing to exercise a greyhound with stress/fatigue fractures causes progression of the injury; maybe resulting in complete fracture.

If you are unsure about how much rest your greyhound needs after an injury, seek immediate advice from your veterinarian.

ICE

- Ice is commonly applied to soft tissue injuries for 5-7 minutes, 3-6 times daily, for the first three or so days following injuries such as torn muscles (monkey, triangle and back muscle).
- Cold pack application can also be used as a treatment for muscle soreness.
- Ice can be used to treat fractures initially, but compressive support (refer below) is preferable for these injuries.
- The application of cold reduces bleeding, swelling and discomfort, and reduces the oxygen demands on the injured tissues.

COMPRESSION

- Compression is usually provided by bandaging to restrict swelling and/or bleeding and provide physical support to the injured area.
- Many greyhound wounds and injuries benefit from the first-aid application of bandaging and participants should make themselves familiar with bandaging techniques. *Refer to the Fact Sheet: Bandaging and Splints.*
- If the location of the injury is obvious, or once there are signs of swelling developing, the application of a firm padded compressive bandage will minimise additional swelling and support the injured area, reducing the likelihood of additional injury.

IN OTHER SITUATIONS

BLEEDING FROM WOUNDS

- Bleeding needs to be controlled as soon as possible.
- Initial treatment should involve direct pressure being applied to the wound, followed by the placement of a dressing and bandage to maintain pressure over the injury.
- *If bleeding is extensive, veterinary assistance should be sought.*
- If bleeding appears to be seeping through to the outer layers of the bandage, additional layers of bandaging should be applied over the top of the original bandage. Do not remove the initial bandage to replace it. *Seek veterinary attention immediately.*

OPEN WOUNDS

- Open wounds should be cleaned of dirt or other material (such as grass, straw, leaf matter) using large volumes of sterile saline/salty solution or clean water.
- The wound should then be covered with a clean (preferably sterile) dressing and bandaged to cover and/or support the injured area until veterinary attention is provided.
- For small wounds (<1 cm) that you intend to attempt to treat yourself, antiseptic spray may be useful, but it should be noted that this can be painful.

SUSPECTED FRACTURES

Veterinary assessment must be sought immediately.

- Suspected fractures must be bandaged and supported as soon as possible to support the injury, reduce post-injury swelling, and to minimise further trauma to surrounding soft tissue structures (tendon, muscle, ligament, blood vessels, nerves and skin).
- Movement of the injured area should be minimal to avoid additional pain.
- A firm padded bandage or Robert Jones bandage should be applied to the area and veterinary attention sought immediately. Refer to [Fact Sheet: Bandaging and Splints](#).
- It is **not** acceptable to leave a suspected fracture unsupported nor is it desirable or necessary to allow swelling to subside before an X-ray can be taken.
- Supportive bandaging preferably with some form of additional splinting of the injured area should be implemented immediately prior transport to the veterinary clinic or while awaiting veterinary attention.

DISLOCATIONS

- Dislocations require immediate veterinary attention so that the dislocation can be reduced (put back in place) as quickly as possible. **Apply support bandaging as per a fracture. Do not attempt this yourself as you may do further damage**

MUSCLE TEARS

- Muscle tears are painful injuries and are usually accompanied by bleeding, bruising and swelling.
- Muscle tears do not usually present as a lameness.
- Some of the first-aid measures of RICE are applicable to this type of injury.
- If your greyhound does not show any improvement in movement after 2-3 days, you should seek veterinary attention.
- *Veterinary attention is recommended* as anti-inflammatories can be prescribed to make your greyhound more comfortable. Your veterinarian can also assess the severity of the muscle tear and provide guidance for exercise during recovery, the recovery time, and suitable return to racing training options.

