

Saving Pets' Lives: Naloxone Training for Dog Opioid Overdoses

March 2026

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THE CONVERSATION

OVERVIEW



Opioid Risk for Pets

Pets, especially dogs, are at risk of opioid overdose due to their exploratory behavior and use of their nose.

Naloxone Awareness Gap

Many pet owners are unaware that naloxone can reverse opioid overdoses in dogs, leading to underutilization during emergencies.

Unique Veterinary Considerations

Dogs require specific naloxone dosing due to unique metabolism and physiological differences compared to humans.

Offering Care

Administering naloxone or providing first aid to an animal in an emergency does not fall within the regulated practice of veterinary medicine; be sure to seek immediate veterinary care if possible.

OFF-LABEL USE & EFFECTIVENESS



Off-Label Use in Animals

Naloxone is used off-label in dogs, especially police dogs exposed to opioids, despite no formal approval.

Effectiveness Against Fentanyl

Studies show naloxone effectively reverses fentanyl sedation in dogs via intramuscular or intranasal administration.

Safety and Monitoring

Naloxone is generally safe for dogs, but monitoring for rare adverse reactions remains important during treatment.

SIGNS OF OPIOID POISONING IN DOGS



Critical Respiratory Signs

Slow or absent breathing is the most life-threatening symptom indicating severe respiratory depression.

Other Key Symptoms

Signs include extreme lethargy, blank stare, unconsciousness, unresponsiveness, pale gums, pinpoint (very small) pupils, and vomiting.

Immediate Intervention

Administer naloxone promptly and seek veterinary care; hesitation can cost a dog's life.

HOW TO ADMINISTER NALOXONE TO DOGS



Intranasal Administration

Hold dog's snout closed, spray naloxone into one nostril, and cover nose with towel to prevent sneezing and spreading opioid residue.

Intramuscular Injection

Inject naloxone into large muscles, specifically the front portion of the upper thigh of the leg.

← See photo

Responder Safety Measures

Wear gloves, wash hands thoroughly after administration, avoid touching face to prevent exposure, use a breathing barrier if rescue breaths are needed (particularly important because dogs likely inhaled the opioid).



DOSAGE, ADMINISTER, REPEAT & MONITOR

Standard naloxone dosage

Take-home naloxone kits have fixed doses safe for humans and dogs.

Repeat Dosing Guidelines

If no improvement after 2-3 minutes, a second dose is recommended; dosing may continue every 2-3 minutes until recovery.

Dose Adjustments for Large Dogs

Larger dogs or high opioid exposure cases may require multiple of higher doses for effective overdose reversal.

Naloxone Monitoring Duration

Naloxone effects are short-lived; seek immediate veterinary care; dogs must be monitored closely for a minimum of 30-90 minutes after treatment for symptom return.

Post-Treatment Hygiene

Wash hands, face, launder clothing, and clean surfaces to reduce risk of secondary opioid exposure after treatment.

KEEPING PETS SAFE



Secure Medication Storage

Store all human and pet medications securely and out of pets' reach.

Recognize Poisoning Signs

Know the signs of opioid poisoning in pets and seek immediate veterinary care if exposure is suspected.

Have 24/7 Resources available

Access the Pet Poison Helpline (fee: \$89 USD) or APSCA Poison control hotline (fee: \$95 USD)

Use Naloxone Wisely

Naloxone should be used only for opioid poisoning; it does not reverse other drug effects like veterinary sedatives.

Avoid Toxic Substances

Prevent exposure to other toxic foods and substances such as chocolate, onions, grapes, and cannabis to keep pets safe.

Toxic Substances

Always give medications as prescribed and safely dispose of when unused or expired.

See more information in The Conversation
www.theconversation.com/ca