

November 2025

The ACO Voice

A Monthly Magazine from the Animal Control & Care Academy ▪ The Only Monthly Publication Dedicated to Animal Control



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ACOs Render Animal First Aid**



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In Memoriam: Roy Marcum, "Stay Safe"

It was a routine call: respond to a home that had had a forced eviction the day before and take away any animals left behind. No one had known that the man evicted the day before had broken back into his house during the night and was awaiting whomever arrived. It was Roy who responded to the call, and the man opened fire through the door, killing Roy. The following stand-off with law enforcement would last for some 17 hours, but the echo of Roy Marcum's now famously known words, "stay safe," have endured these last 13 years. Roy's tragic death sent shockwaves through the animal care and control world and sparked the issuance of ballistic vests to many animal control professionals all over the country. Sadly, vests are not mandated in all states, so some ACOs continue to be at risk due to a lack of understanding or acceptance that ACOs are also law enforcement officials.

In a career field where some statistics have shown that an animal control officer can have as many as five times more contacts with citizens as a police officer will during that same single shift, the idea that ACOs are not at risk like police officers are, is simply not true. ACOs enforce local laws and respond to the same neighborhoods, same homes, same people that traditional law enforcement officials do. And ACOs end up going to dangerous houses often without the benefit of a dispatcher who knows the house or residents are on local LEO hot sheets. Roy was known for reminding everyone to "stay safe," and this saying is memorialized on a patch in his honor that is worn, carried, or displayed by many to this day. So to "Roy Marcum #463 EOW 11-28-2012" we remind everyone to stay safe and we still say rest in peace ACO, we still have the watch from here.

Respectfully submitted,

JT Taylor, Senior Instructor

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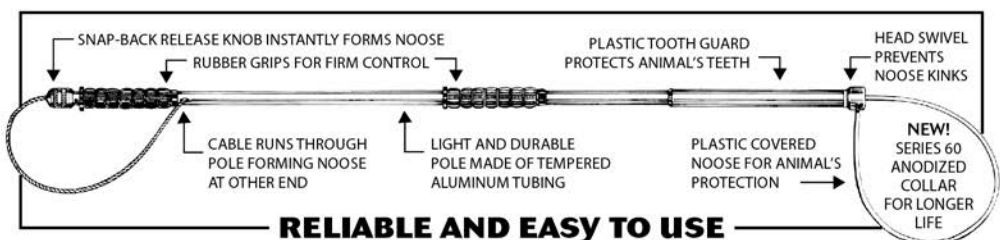
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Focusing on “Aid” in First Aid with ACOs

How often do animal control officers respond to reports of an animal hit-by-car (HBC) complaint? And just how often do those responses result in the animal being found still alive, but injured when the ACO arrives? Many ACOs are not trained in rendering first aid to injured animals, so what actions do they need to take to ensure the highest likelihood the animal will survive until it gets to the veterinarian? Similarly, how often do ACOs respond to an animal neglect or abuse complaint only to find an animal at that location is seriously injured or ill? Short of wrapping them up and transporting them to a veterinarian, what else can be done?

The reality is that animal care and control professionals find themselves in many situations where emergency pet first aid might be needed before getting the animal to a veterinarian. A pet left in a car could become hyperthermic or hypothermic, depending on the outside temperatures and how long the pet has been in the vehicle. ACOs could be called to an accidental or intentional poisoning; a pet that has been shot, burned, or nearly drowned; or any number of animal life threatening conditions. ACOs might encounter pets with arterial bleeding from some sharp force trauma; bee stings, snake bites or other insect bites; or trauma from having been attacked by another animal. ACOs could find a pet with bone fractures or compound breaks or might find them in some form of respiratory distress. Animal care and control professionals often need to provide initial care for animals with injuries.

While it is true that most animal care and control professionals are not trained in veterinary medicine, there is considerably more first aid that can be rendered to improve the likelihood of the animal

reaching proper medical care than simply loading them into the truck and driving them to the vet's office. In part one of this three-part series, the basic pet/animal first aid kit and initial animal assessment will be discussed, followed by emergency treatment of certain conditions in parts two and three. Rendering aid, however, must begin with having not only pet/animal first aid training, but also having a well-stocked and prepared animal first aid kit.

Animal first aid kits should have a variety of sizes of muzzles and leashes, bite gloves for the animal handler(s), a pet stretcher, gauze, stretch bandages, splints, and first aid tape. They should also have a mylar blanket to help keep the animal warm and reduce the effects of shock. There should be a variety of sizes of both adhesive and non-stick sterile gauze pads, hand towels, cotton balls and sterile swabs included. Bottles of 0.5% Chlorhexidine wash, hydrogen peroxide, and saline solution should be available along with sterile eye ointment, lubricant jelly, activated charcoal, Kaolin-Pectin, and triple antibiotic cream. A blood clotting powder would be helpful



Muzzling wrapping an Injured animal before picking it up ensures ACO safety

Injured or ill animals pose a particularly unpredictable threat to officer safety. Muzzling or muzzle wrapping the animal before handling it will go a long way to ensure its safe care.

for small bleeding punctures, lacerations or incisions. Forceps/tweezers, scissors, bulb syringes in a variety of sizes, and a plastic digital rectal thermometer should be included as well as a variety of syringes, and gauges of needles. The kit should include cold packs, hot packs, pet-pillers and a stethoscope. Tourniquet straps/tubing, disposable gloves, and a variety of towels/blankets can be useful. Finally, a selection of tongue depressors and small and medium scissors will complete your basic kit.

In addition to these basic kit supplies, some common over-the-counter (OTC) medications can be useful. For instance, 3% hydrogen peroxide can be used to induce vomiting as well as clean wounds. Its dosage is one teaspoon per 10 pounds of animal. Syrup of Ipecac can also induce vomiting and should be given as one teaspoon per 20 pounds of animal. Buffered aspirin, at one adult tablet per 40 pounds of animal, can reduce fever and inflammation, offer mild to moderate pain relief and aid in arthritis relief. Common vegetable oil, at one teaspoon per 5 pounds of animal, mixed into the animal's food, can relieve constipation and help cats with hairballs. Milk of Magnesia relieves vomiting or constipation, and deactivates poisons when administered at two teaspoons per 10 pounds of animal. And one-half gram of activated charcoal per pound of animal can deactivate most poisons.

Other OTC products have applications in emergency pet first aid, but the ACO should consult with a veterinarian before adding items to their emergency pet first aid kit or administering anything.

When receiving a dispatch to a sick or injured animal call, ACOs should obtain from the dispatcher as much information about the animal, its known condition and the circumstances surrounding the illness or injury as possible. If the dispatcher doesn't have enough information, get the reporting party's name and phone number, then call him/her. Information is the most important part of pre-treatment. Information also helps the ACO to think ahead and plan for additional manpower or equipment that may be needed.

Upon arrival on the scene, remember to maintain officer safety disciplines and situational awareness. Look for conditions such as

traffic, gas or other chemical spills, fire, rising flood waters, dangerous debris, metals or glass, other animals, and people. The primary purpose of emergency pet/animal first aid is stabilization of the sick or injured animal in preparation for transportation to a veterinarian and should be done in a precise order. An ACO must approach the injured or ill animal slowly and cautiously, speaking to the animal in a soft, gentle voice, while using small slow motions and without making direct eye contact. Unless the animal is vomiting, it is best to put a muzzle or muzzle-wrap on the animal. Remember, ACOs cannot render much emergency aid if they themselves get bitten and become a victim.

In the next issue of *The ACO Voice*, the discussion on rendering first aid and emergency care to injured or sick animals will continue with triage and checking the animal's vitals, before concluding in the January 2026 issue with techniques for rendering aid in specific conditions.

Cover photo: Gauze and Kerlex can be used to stabilize leg injuries and other wounds

Kerlix, a sterile, crinkled gauze bandage is made of 100% cotton and is excellent for wrapping or bandaging wounds or injuries.



Open wounds come from more than being hit by a car

Animal attack wounds and trauma received by being struck by a vehicle or falling from a vehicle are not the only circumstances that cause animals to obtain open wounds which may need responding ACOs to triage and treat before transporting the animal to a vet.



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