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A healthy hunting dog is a hard-working hunting dog

By Babe Winkelman

While well-conditioned dogs can withstand a lot of punishment, injuries are bound to happen. For that reason, it's important for dog owners to carry a first-aid kit and know how to deal with field injuries.

"The first thing I'd recommend is getting a book on first aid for dogs," says Alice Woodyard, a professional dog trainer who serves as a consultant for TriTronics. Alice recommends a book called "Dog First Aid" by veterinarian Randy Acker.

Dr. Acker's book deals with everything from snakebites and broken bones to carbon monoxide poisoning. Because it's impossible to address all those subjects in one column, I agree with Alice's suggestion that every gun-dog owner get such a book and READ it.

The second thing Alice suggests is to ask your vet for a list of items to include in a first-aid kit. Necessary items will vary depending on your dog's individual health history and where you hunt. Here are some of Alice's suggestions:

One of the first items every dog-owner should stock is a bottle of buffered aspirin. A dog's muscles get stiff and sore, and that's especially true of older dogs or dogs with arthritis. Veterinarians recommend one adult (five-grain) pill per 40 pounds of weight, given during the morning and evening feedings.

Eyewash is another necessity for any first-aid kit. Ask your vet to recommend a high-quality eyewash and administer a few drops at the beginning and end of each hunting day. Also use the solution to flush out debris from the eyes as necessary.

Among the other things to have in your kit are hydrogen peroxide to induce vomiting and rinse open wounds, sterile gauze, a roll of elastic bandage, a needle-nose pliers or hemostat to remove porcupine quills, an antihistamine for allergies or snake bites, a vet-approved solution for cleaning ears, and a muzzle. The muzzle is to keep the dog's mouth closed in the event of a serious injury.

You should also include some anti-bacterial hand wipes, not only to clean up and help sanitize a dog's wound but also to wash your hands before dealing with a cut or other emergency.

According to Woodyard, one of the most frightening and least-understood problems in



the field is exercise-induced collapse. When a dog overheats it may lose muscle control in the rear end and become wobbly. This condition, if severe, can be fatal if the dog isn't cooled off quickly. When overheating occurs, hunters should avoid putting the dog in the travel kennel. Instead, it's important to cool the dog down immediately.

First, give your dog water. If a pond is available, have the dog cool off in the water. If no water is handy, apply a mixture of rubbing alcohol and water to the dog's stomach and armpits as an emergency coolant. Some hunters carry a wet towel packed in a few ice cubes in a Ziploc bag. The cool, wet towel will help bring the dog's temperature down until you can get it to water.

If your dog gets a cut, the wound should be thoroughly flushed with hydrogen peroxide, then coated with an antiseptic cream and bandaged. Dogs may continue hunting if the cut is minor. Deep cuts may require

stitches by a vet, but still must be rinsed and bandaged in the field.

Pad cuts are common among gun dogs. Dogs with pad wounds should be taken to the vet, but not until the gash has been washed and an antiseptic cream applied. Because many dogs will lick or chew an open wound, vets suggest placing a dog "boot" on the foot and wrapping it with duct or adhesive tape while transporting the dog.

In the event of a snakebite, Alice says she doesn't attempt to treat the bite in the field and suggests packing the area in ice and getting the dog to the vet quickly.

Ackers' book recommends applying a loose tourniquet or constricting band two to three inches above the bite to slow the movement of venom. Rapid absorption of large amounts of venom can be fatal. The wrap should not be too tight and must be monitored because swelling is bound to occur quickly. The wound should be washed and packed with ice, then an anti-

histamine administered. The dog should be taken to a veterinarian immediately.

One final thought: A lot of articles I've seen lately recommend converting working dogs to a high-protein food during hunting season. Most nutrition experts suggest, and Woodyard concurs, that dogs should be switched to a high-fat food prior to and during the hunting season. Hard-working dogs should be fed morning and night, and during hunting trips should be allowed to eat as much as they can.

The upland bird season is just around the corner. And waterfowling isn't too far away either. So now is the time to prepare yourself, your dog and your first-aid gear for the upcoming hunts. If you do, you can help prevent a field tragedy and keep your favorite hunting partner healthy and happy all season long.

Good Hunting.
Babe Winkelman is a nationally-known outdoorsman who has taught people to fish and hunt for more than 25 years.

Pheasant in Mustard Sauce

Ingredients

2 boneless skinless pheasant breast halves
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/8 teaspoon pepper
1 tablespoon canola oil
1 tablespoon butter
1/4 cup chopped onion
1 garlic clove, minced
1/2 cup chicken broth
2 tablespoons lemon juice
3 tablespoons Dijon mustard
3/4 teaspoon dried marjoram

Hot cooked rice

Directions

Sprinkle pheasant with salt and pepper. In a skillet over medium heat, brown pheasant in oil and butter on both sides, about 6-8 minutes.

In a small bowl, combine the onion, garlic, broth, lemon juice, mustard and marjoram; add to skillet. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; cover and simmer for 15-20 minutes or until pheasant juices run clear. Serve with rice. Yield: 2 servings.

Ruffed Grouse And Wild Rice

Ingredients

16 pieces grouse (raw)
2 cans cream of celery soup
2 cans cream of chicken soup
1 can drained mushrooms
2 cans water
1 pkg. dry onion soup mix
1 c. wild rice washed, soaked in hot water
1 c. white rice

Directions

Mix all ingredients except grouse in 9 x 13 inch baking pan. Lay grouse pieces on top of mixture. Salt grouse. Bake, covered with foil at 350 degrees for 1 hour. Uncover, continue baking about 1/2 hour or until rice is cooked. Serves 6.

This dish may be made equally well using all wild rice instead of half white rice.

Ruffed Grouse

When a ruffed grouse flushes from underfoot, the loud sound can startle even experienced outdoors people. This woodland bird is the most popular of Minnesota's upland game birds. Noted for its muffled drumming sounds during the spring mating season, the ruffed grouse is present in Minnesota forests from Iowa to Manitoba.

General description: During courtship, ruffed grouse display banded fan-shaped tails. Males also have a concealed neck ruff (hence the name "ruffed grouse") that they display during courtship. Color phases range from gray to chestnut. In winter, ruffed grouse have comb-like fringes on their toes that, like snowshoes, allow for easy travel on snow.

Length: About 12 inches.
Weight: About 1.5 pounds.

Each spring, male ruffed grouse perform a mating ritual that sounds like the beating of a distant drum. The male "drums" by compressing air beneath its wings. The bird makes the sound in the hopes of attracting a female grouse. Most males drum on a log, but they may also stand on roots and boulders.

The peak of the mating season is late April. Nests are placed on the ground, usually in dense forest in a depression next to a tree trunk or stump. Hens lay about 10 to 14 eggs that hatch in 23 days. The male grouse has no parenting role. The chicks stay with the hen until late September and are fully grown in 16 weeks.

Ruffed grouse favor the buds and twigs of aspen

but also eat the fruits of dogwood, mountain ash, and thornapple. They also eat rose hips and the green leaves of clover, strawberries, bunchberry, aspen and some ferns. Insects are the primary food of ruffed grouse chicks.

Many animals hunt ruffed grouse, including birds of prey such as goshawk, great horned owl, and various mammals such as fox, fisher and bobcat. Humans also hunt and eat ruffed grouse.

Ruffed grouse are found in forests from southeastern to northwestern Minnesota. Young to middle-aged aspen forests provide the best habitat. Alder lowlands and patches of gray dogwood are especially attractive to ruffed grouse in summer and fall. During winter, ruffed grouse spend nearly all of their time in snow burrows to stay warm and avoid predators. A ruffed grouse lives most of its life within just a few acres. Population and management

Ruffed grouse populations rise and fall at intervals of about 10 years. Many other species of wildlife such as snowshoe hares also cycle at 10-year intervals. The causes of these cycles are unknown. In Minnesota, the annual hunter harvest varies from 250,000 to more than one million ruffed grouse. Hunting does not affect ruffed grouse populations either at the top or bottom of their population cycles.

Ruffed grouse are loners. Unlike most other game bird species, which form coveys or flocks, ruffed grouse spend most of their adult life alone, except during the mating season.

Good luck and safe hunting



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