

# Be Prepared for Emergencies

By Dr. Tracie Laliberte

Since the incident that occurred while I was ring stewarding at an all-breed show in early June, the idea of emergency preparedness has occupied my thoughts.

The situation began when the judge in the adjacent ring pointed to their major winner. When the thrilled exhibitor was about to get his ribbon, he collapsed to the ground less than five feet away from us. In a flurry, folks from our ring, who happened to be first responders handed off their dogs, hurdled over the ring gate, and began administering first aid to the unconscious man. They began CPR while the steward in the adjacent ring dialed 911. Within seconds, the on-site paramedic, with AED in hand, was running full speed towards us, and I heard an approaching exhibitor call out, "I'm a doctor!" Folks, including me, held dogs while others outside the ring began moving gates and clearing a path for the arriving ambulance and EMTs.



This was a very tense situation, and if I hadn't known otherwise, it would have appeared that our emergency response was a rehearsed effort, yet this was definitely not a drill. Perhaps our proficiency was because this was personal for us. The emergency at hand involved a member of our dog community who had been attending shows for decades.

By the time the ambulance departed for the hospital, competitors were tending to Bob's dogs and to other personal matters. While the show grounds were being reassembled, I returned the dog that I had been holding for one of the initial first responders. The show resumed, and we all waited for news.

Sadly, Bob passed. I'm proud of the effort we made, and I know that the swift actions of everyone provided the best chance for a different outcome for him. I can say with certainty that immediate first aid administered by first responders, the on-site AED with a trained paramedic, and the lightening quick response time by the ambulance, provided the most favorable odds for his survival.

Apparently, situations such as this happen much more often at dog events than one would imagine.

With the reality about the graying of the show world, this fact shouldn't surprise anyone. For me, the experience got me thinking about the what-ifs? What if it had been me on the ground? What if nobody knew CPR? What if there'd been no AED? What if the ambulance had been further away? What if...?

Like most dog people, I have an emergency plan for home that includes evacuation and personal emergency preparedness. I have supplies, instructions, dog identification, medical records and other necessities on the ready.

If you don't already have one, you should also establish an "away" plan. At a minimum you should have visible and accessible emergency contact information (not locked in your phone) for you and for your dogs at home. My plan

also includes visible identification, essential information, and supplies for each dog traveling with me. Simply putting your dog's call name on their crate or collar is exponentially useful in the immediacy of an emergency. Canine Good Citizen training for supervised separation also comes in handy. We always practice this activity in my puppy life-skills class to teach the dogs to remain calm when their owner is out of sight.

Personally, I plan to expand emergency readiness in at least two ways. First, I plan to provide instruction to my students about how to properly and safely handle someone else's dog during separation. Secondly, I have already found a CPR certification course that I hope to take this summer. Even if I never use it, I will have peace of mind knowing that this instruction might make the difference in a "what if?" scenario.

Godspeed, Bob. You were surrounded by folks who cared, and your dogs are safe.

---

*Dr. Laliberte is a regular contributor to the Bulletin and lives in Attleboro, MA. She is a multiple award-winning writer and also works as an adjunct college professor. Tracie's PhD is in the study of the human-canine relationship.*



Practicing CPR on a mannequin