

## Paws Up for Pets

# Learn prevention, first aid skills to keep pets from choking

Take a look at dates on calendars and you will discover dozens of days and months designated as pet holidays or awareness dates.

But the one I regard as the most lifesaving date arrives every June 22. It is called National Pet Choking Prevention Day (<https://nationalpetchokingpreventionday.com>) and was launched last year by Dr. Judy Morgan, an integrative veterinarian.

"I saw many choking cases involving dogs and cats during my career and some of these cases did not have good outcomes, which is very sad as this is something that is preventable," says Morgan, who practiced veterinary medicine for 36 years, including a decade in emergency medicine. She now operates Dr. Judy Morgan's Naturally Healthy Pets site (<https://drjudymorgan.com>) to empower and educate pet parents on ways to keep their pets healthy and safe.

She says that each year there are more than 200,000 cases of cats and dogs choking and needing medical care, as reported by veterinarians across the country. Sadly, some of these pets do not survive.

Learning pet first aid and regularly doing room-by-room inspections to remove potential choking items are two ways to keep our pets safe.

I've been a master certified pet first aid/CPR instructor for 12 years. In my classes, I train pet parents and pet professionals how to perform abdominal thrusts safely to dislodge objects in cats and dogs.

Recently, one of my students, Linda Brown Hall, co-founder of Cat Behavior Alliance (<https://catbehavioralliance.com>) in Defiance, Ohio, reached out to share how she saved the life of her cat, Gallway.

"Gallway's body was jerking, but he was not making any sound," says Linda. "When I placed my hand against his nose and mouth, I did not feel any air. Opening his mouth, I discovered he had Saran wrap blocking his airway. I performed the Heimlich maneuver you taught us in class and saved his life."

### Step-by-step Heimlich maneuver guide

For cats and small dogs choking due to having their airways partially or completely blocked by an object, follow these veterinarian-approved steps to perform abdominal thrusts effectively:

- Stand and hold your dog with her back against your stomach.
- Hold her up with one arm around her upper abdomen.
- With your other hand, make a fist, tucking in your thumb.



Arden Moore demonstrates the canine Heimlich maneuver on her dog Kona. Photo provided

### Household hazards

Common items in homes that can cause choking or even unconsciousness if swallowed by cats or dogs: avocado pits, baby bottle nipples, baby carrots, bully sticks, buttons, chew toys, corn cobs, dental floss, diapers, food wrappers, game pieces, hair ties, hot dogs, jewelry, kibble pieces, plastic bags, rawhide chews, refrigerator magnets, rubber bands, shoelaces, socks, squeakers from plush toys, sticks, string, tennis balls, tinsel, underwear, window blind cords, yarn.

- Position your closed fist at the end of her ribcage in the soft spot.

- Thrust your fist in and upward five times in a row on the pet's exhale to try to dislodge the object.

- Every five thrusts, open and inspect the mouth to see if you can dislodge any object.

- Be ready to perform rescue breaths if the pet becomes unconscious.

- Use the speaker function on your cellphone to alert the nearest veterinary clinic of your arrival as you continue the abdominal thrusts.

For medium to large dogs whose airways are partially or completely blocked by an object, follow these steps:

- Stand behind your dog if she is standing.
- With one hand, make a fist and tuck in your thumb.
- Position this closed fist at the soft spot just past the ribcage.
- Use your open-palm hand to hold this fist in place.
- Thrust your hands up

and forward (toward the dog's mouth) five times in a row on the dog's exhale to try to dislodge the object.

- Every five thrusts, open and inspect the mouth to see if you can dislodge any object.

- Be ready to perform rescue breaths if your dog becomes unconscious.

- Use the speaker function on your cellphone to alert the nearest veterinary clinic of your arrival as you continue the abdominal thrusts.

Many dogs, including Kona, my terrier mix, love fetching balls. Many cats, including mine, hone their hunting skills by stalking feather wand toys and other wiggling linear objects. To reduce the risk of your pet choking, heed these safety tips:

- Opt for using balls that are made of pet-safe materials. Select balls that are too big to fit inside your dog's mouth to reduce chances of blocking the airway.

- Get in the habit of playing with your cat with wand toys and other linear toys and then storing them in a cat-safe container to prevent accidental choking.

Parting message from Morgan, "Every pet parent should watch a video on performing the Heimlich maneuver or take a course in pet first aid. Having knowledge prior to an incident will save valuable time and potentially save the life of a dog or a cat."

Arden Moore is an author, speaker and master certified pet first aid instructor. Learn more by visiting [www.ardenmoore.com](http://www.ardenmoore.com).



## Jayne Robinson

### Touch of English

LUXURY LIFESTYLE MANAGEMENT

+1 (561) 305-2317

[hello@touch-of-english.com](mailto:hello@touch-of-english.com)

@touchofenglish

# As a newspaper, we're used to asking for tips, just not this kind...

... join dozens of other readers who financially support our local news coverage.

Support The Coastal Star's mission by mail or online

Mail your contribution to:

The Coastal Star  
5114 North Ocean Blvd.  
Ocean Ridge FL 33435

Or donate online at:

<https://supportfloridajournalism.com/newspaper/the-coastal-star/>

Thank you for helping to make The Coastal Star the go-to source for local, timely news. Our goal has always been to link all of us, one to the other, from South Palm Beach to Boca Raton. We connect our communities by shining a bright light on the ins and outs, ups and downs of coastal life, its unique style and the possibilities (and pitfalls) it creates for all of us. We appreciate your support.

Donations made to the Florida Press Foundation benefit The Coastal Star Community News Fund, a 501(c)(3) non-profit fund and are tax deductible to the full extent of the law. A 5.5% administration fee is applied. Donations made directly to The Coastal Star are not tax deductible.

## Send other tips to:

[news@thecoastalstar.com](mailto:news@thecoastalstar.com)



## The Coastal Star

SHINING A LIGHT TO CONNECT OUR COMMUNITIES

The next edition of *The Coastal Star* will be delivered the weekend of July 6