



VITAL SIGNS

Rectal Temperature for Cats and Dogs

- Taking an animal's rectal temperature is the best way to know if your pet has a fever or is in hypothermia.
- Use a rectal pediatric thermometer lubricated with Vaseline.
- It is a misconception to estimate the condition of an animal by whether its nose is cool or warm. An animal may have a cool nose and a burning fever of 103 F!
- Warm ears on the other hand can be an indication of fever or freezing ears an indication of hypothermia.

Normal Temperature: 100.5F -102.5 F (38.0 C- 39.1 C)

Abnormal: Hypothermia T<99.5 F(37.5 C)

Abnormal: Hyperthermia T>102.4 F(39.1 C)

Respiratory Rate for Cats and Dogs

TECHNIQUE

- Observe chest motion or place a wet finger or pocket mirror over the nares
- Count the rate over 15 seconds and multiply by 4

CATS

- Cats normal rate – 20-30 breaths /minute
- Cats panting – up to 300 pants/minute
- Cats do not usually pant unless they are in a stressful situation (going to the vets), frightened, in hot weather. They should not pant for more than a few minutes at a time. If panting persists and the animal cannot return to normal breathing treat as an emergency.

DOGS

- Puppies normal rate 15-40 breaths/minute
- Dogs normal rate 10-30 breaths/minute
- Toy breeds (small dogs) normal rate 15-40 breaths/minute
- Dogs that are panting – up to 200 pants/minute

ABNORMAL BREATHING

- If while breathing the abdomen is expanding instead of the chest on inhalation your pet is not breathing normally. You should seek veterinary care.
- Slow or fast respiratory rate, loud gasping sounds, shallow breathing, or breathing with mouth open, this is to be treated as an emergency. Seek veterinary care.

Normal Heart Rate for Dogs and Cats

- Cats 110-130- beats/minute
- Puppies 70-120 beats/minute
- Dogs 70-180 beats/minute
- Toy breeds (small dogs) 70-220 beats/minute.
- The normal heart sound should consist of 2 separate beats with a silent interval between them and a regular rhythm; LUB DUB, LUB TUB (like a drum). If you have any doubts about your animal's heart or if the heart rate is not normal treat as an emergency and seek veterinary care.
- The heart rate can also be taken by locating the animal's pulse along the femoral artery (inner thigh) or under the arm.

Color of Gums

- A bright healthy pink color of the gums indicates good blood circulation and oxygenation going to the tissues.
- Abnormal color of gums : dark red, gray, blue or white

TECHNIQUE

- Lift your pet's upper or lower lip and observe the color of the inner lip and gums. A healthy animal should have a pink color to the gums. Brick red or brown, pale light pink, white, yellow or blue colors of the mucous membranes are colors indicative of an emergency (shock, loss of blood, or anemia).
- Some breeds have dark pigmentation in their inner lips and gums making observations difficult and misleading. For these dogs check for color by gently pulling down on the skin just below the eye with your thumb and observe the color in the inner eyelid.

Dehydration

- Dehydration can easily occur if an animal has been vomiting or has diarrhea.
- Grasp the skin between the shoulder blades; it should bounce back upon releasing the skin almost immediately. Skin that takes more than 2 seconds to bounce back or stands up in the position grasped is a sign of dehydration and in need of veterinary attention.

First Aid Tips information gathered from:

AVMA - American Veterinary Medical Association www.avma.org

AAHA - American Animal Hospital Association www.healthypet.com

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