

# Working Dog Emergency Cheat Sheet

Eight things that kill farm dogs - and what to do in the first 15 minutes. Australian-specific. Pin inside the ute.

Eight emergencies that kill farm dogs. What to do in the first 15 minutes. Driving usually beats calling - vets often can't talk you through anything complex over the phone.

## Snake bite

**Signs:** Sudden weakness, dilated pupils, drooling, vomiting, paralysis. Brown, tiger, red-belly black are the big AU killers.

### What to do:

- Keep the dog STILL. Carry to the ute - do not let it walk.
- Apply firm pressure bandage over the bite site if you can identify it. Then bandage UP the limb toward the body (Pressure-Immobilisation Bandage technique).
- Drive to the vet. Antivenom is the only treatment - \$\$\$ but life-saving.
- Do NOT cut, suck, or apply tourniquet. Do NOT try to identify the snake.

## Paralysis tick (*Ixodes holocyclus*)

**Signs:** QLD coast / NSW north coast / VIC east coast. Weakness in hind legs first, then forelegs, then breathing.

### What to do:

- Search the dog all over - especially head, neck, between toes, in ears. Ticks are small (mm-scale).
- Remove the tick with tweezers or a tick hook - grip close to skin, pull straight out.
- Drive to vet IMMEDIATELY. Symptoms get worse for 24-48h even AFTER tick removal. Tick antiserum is essential.
- Keep dog cool, calm, quiet on the drive. No food/water (aspiration risk).

## Heat stroke

**Signs:** Heavy panting that won't stop, bright red gums, drooling, vomiting, collapse. Body temp > 41 degC.

### What to do:

- Get to shade NOW. Move away from car parks (radiant heat) and any hot ground.
- Cool with COOL water (not icy) - hose, dam, creek. Focus on belly, groin, paws, neck.
- DO NOT immerse in ice. Causes vasoconstriction that traps heat.
- Drive to vet even if dog 'seems fine' - organ damage from heat can show up hours later.

## Bloat / GDV (gastric dilatation-volvulus)

**Signs:** Distended belly, unproductive retching, restlessness, drooling, pale gums. Deep-chested breeds (kelpie, GSD, kelpie crosses).

**What to do:**

- This is a surgical emergency. Survival drops every minute.
- Drive to nearest vet immediately. Call ahead so they prep.
- Do NOT give water. Do NOT try to make the dog vomit.

## 1080 (sodium fluoroacetate) baiting

**Signs:** Hyper-excitability, frantic running, vocalising, then seizures and collapse. Onset 30 min to 3 hours after ingestion.

### What to do:

- There is no antidote. Survival depends on early decontamination.
- Induce vomiting ONLY within 30 minutes of ingestion: 3% hydrogen peroxide, 1 mL per kg orally (max 45 mL).
- Drive to vet immediately. They may give activated charcoal + sedation for seizures.
- Keep dogs OFF baited areas - your neighbours' wild dog programs are the most common source.

## Blocked bladder / urethral obstruction

**Signs:** Straining to urinate with little or no output, painful belly, vomiting, lethargy. Common in working male dogs that have held off for hours.

### What to do:

- Get to a vet within 24 hours. Untreated, the bladder ruptures (fatal) or kidneys fail.
- Don't restrict water - the dog needs to flush.
- Long-term: more frequent toileting breaks, water always available, address diet if recurring.

## Allergic reaction / anaphylaxis

**Signs:** Sudden swelling of face/muzzle/ears, hives, vomiting, collapse. Bee/wasp stings, snake antivenom, drug reactions.

### What to do:

- If breathing is compromised: drive to vet NOW. This is life-threatening.
- If mild (just facial swelling, dog alert): you have hours. Call the vet for advice.
- Antihistamines: many vets recommend Polaramine (dexchlorpheniramine) 0.5 mg per kg - but call yours first, don't dose blind.

## Gunshot / serious trauma

**Signs:** Working dogs occasionally get hit by accidental discharge or shrapnel. Major bleeding, fractures.

### What to do:

- Apply firm direct pressure to any bleeding wound with clean cloth.
- Splint any obviously broken limb if you can without distressing the dog further.
- Drive to vet. Call ahead. Keep dog warm with a blanket - shock kills more often than the initial wound.
- Do NOT give pain relief from your own kit. Most human pain meds are toxic to dogs (paracetamol, ibuprofen).

**When to drive vs when to call:** If breathing is affected, drive. If the dog can't stand, drive. If you can SEE the problem (visible wound, swelling, distended belly), drive. Phone calls are for vague things like 'off his food' or 'limping' where a vet can triage by phone first.

**Nearest 24-hour vet (write yours here):** \_\_\_\_\_