



Cardiopulmonary Arrest and Resuscitation in Small Animals

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Cardiopulmonary arrest is defined as the abrupt, unexpected cessation of spontaneous and effective ventilation and blood circulation. Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) provides artificial ventilation and circulation until advanced life support can be provided and spontaneous ventilation and circulation can be restored.

Cardiopulmonary arrest usually results from an abnormal heart rhythm caused by primary cardiac disease or diseases that affect other organ systems. Common causes include trauma, pneumonia, neoplasia (cancer) and primary heart disease.

The typical description of arrest includes the following: (1) absence of breathing and cyanosis (blue-tinged gums, tongue, etc.); (2) absence of a palpable pulse (neck – jugular, inner leg – femoral); (3) absence of heart sounds or movement (feel or listen on left side of chest); (4) dilated pupils.

Once you have observed that a pet has no movement of the chest wall and you suspect cardiopulmonary arrest, cover the pet's nose and mouth with your mouth and deliver two long breaths, ensuring that the chest swells with each breath (in larger pets, you may have to close the mouth and breath into the nose). If the pet does not begin to breathe within 5-7 seconds, begin CPR and follow the ABC protocol. As soon as possible, seek veterinary medical attention and/or advice for advanced life support measures.

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Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation

