



Working dog safety & first aid

Risks to working dogs

Wild dogs and working dogs are usually very similar in size and behaviour, and available control tools will affect both. Poisons, traps and ejectors present the highest risks to working dogs.

PAPP and 1080 are toxic to working dogs and some other domestic animals, so these non-target animals are most at risk during wild dog baiting campaigns. The best way to prevent working dogs from being poisoned is to keep them away from any source of poison. This is partly managed by following the label instructions and the usage guidelines for the product, which state that you must inform your neighbours of where and when you plan to use baits, and store and transport baits in appropriate containers.

Working dogs may also get caught in traps set for wild dogs. Dogs captured accidentally are unlikely to suffer major injuries, but they can be 'foot sore' for a short time and might not be able to work until they have recovered. Working dogs are also susceptible to poisoning from lethal trap devices where used.

Steps to reduce the risk to your working dog

- Know where baits have been laid – distribute baits only in places where working dogs do not visit. Pick up and dispose of any remaining baits once the baiting program is finished.
- Muzzle your dogs – muzzling is simple, cheap and does not usually reduce a dog's work performance. It can prevent your dog from taking a bait, pulling an ejector or chewing a lethal trap device.
- Keep your dogs kennelled in pens or tethered on runs while they are not being used for work or play.
- Do not take unmuzzled dogs into a baited area for at least 6 months in wet areas and 12 months in dry areas.
- Keep your dogs away from dead or dying poisoned animals and any toxic vomit.
- Supervise your dog when it is off the lead, and make sure suitable emetics, vets' telephone numbers and first aid materials are available to help your dog's chances of survival if poisoning does occur.
- Never assume that a bait is safe.



Image: Alf Manciangli

First aid for your working dog

1080 poisoning

Once eaten, 1080 is rapidly absorbed from the gut into the bloodstream. Once it is in an animal's circulation, it blocks the chemical reactions that produce energy in cells. Over time, this lack of cell energy prevents organs from functioning properly. Each organ then begins to shut down, causing a variety of visible signs.

Signs to look for:

- anxiety
- frenzied behaviour
- hypersensitivity
- loud vocalising, yelping and howling
- failure to respond to owner
- vomiting
- uncontrolled urinating and defecating
- convulsions
- seizures and fits
- breathing difficulties
- coma or unconsciousness.

1080 first aid

You need to act immediately to save your poisoned dog. Once signs of 1080 poisoning are apparent, the outlook (even with treatment) is poor and dogs rarely survive. However, if you suspect your dog has ingested 1080 but has not yet begun to show signs:

- induce vomiting (to get the bait out)
- take your dog to a vet immediately
- keep your dog as cool and as quiet as possible

PAPP poisoning

Once eaten, PAPP is rapidly absorbed from the gut into the bloodstream. Once in the blood, it prevents red blood cells from carrying oxygen and this restricts supply to the heart muscles and brain. Poisoned animals first become lethargic and sleepy before eventually falling unconscious and dying. Even after signs of PAPP poisoning are apparent, the outlook can be good as long as the antidote is administered in time.

Signs to look for:

- highly increased heart rate
- colour changes to tongue, lips, and gums (from pink to blue/grey)
- rapidly increasing lethargy, indicated by
 - salivating (dribbling)
 - appearing dazed and wobbly
 - dragging feet and sitting down
 - being unable to lift head or move limbs
- unconsciousness.

PAPP first aid

You need to act immediately to save your poisoned dog – the sooner, the better. Because the effects of PAPP progress from mild to worse as the poison takes hold, different first aid actions are needed at different stages. Always take your dog to a vet straight away, avoid extremes in temperature, and keep your dog as quiet as possible.

Early stages (conscious)

- induce vomiting (to get the bait out)
- administer antidote (only available from veterinarians).

Late stages (conscious and unconscious)

- DO NOT induce vomiting (the dog may be too weak to handle the physical energy needed to vomit)
- administer antidote (only available from veterinarians).
- once antidote has worked induce vomiting.

What can I use to make my dog vomit?

Care must be taken when inducing vomiting as your dog may react violently and bite you. Giving too much of some emetics (ie substances that induce vomiting) might also make the dog critically ill. If the dog has vomited, be aware that the vomit is toxic and should be cleaned up immediately. Emetics should be kept in an accessible place (ie the glove box of the ute) in case of poisoning. Suitable emetics include:

- table salt in water: 2 teaspoons of salt in 1 cup of water; less for small dogs, more for larger breeds
- washing soda crystals (sodium carbonate): 3-5 crystals orally, DO NOT use laundry detergents or powders
- copper sulphate crystals: 2 pea-sized crystals.

If you can't make your dog vomit, do not waste time trying again, and take your dog to a vet immediately. The vet will need to know:

- what the suspected poison is



Image: Dave Worsley

- how long ago your dog was exposed to it
- what your dog was exposed to (a bait, carcass or unknown)
- how the dog is acting now (clinical signs and symptoms)
- how long the signs have been noticeable.

Trap/foot injuries

Trapping will rarely leave your dog with any permanent injuries, although they might end up with some hair loss or scarring on their foot. More severe injuries might develop later, depending on how the dog was captured and how long it stayed in the trap. These injuries might include the loss of toe nails, toe/foot pads wearing off, or disfigurement. Housing your dog in a 'soft' environment (ie not on concrete or wire) during recovery can help to prevent these later injuries from happening.

Domestic and working dogs will usually yelp and howl to let you know they are caught in a trap. Be aware that dogs may react violently and bite as you get them out of a trap.

To help your dog recover from being trapped:

- Get your dog out of the trap as quickly as possible.
- If the paw is swollen, gently massage it to increase blood flow.
- If the paw has minor cuts or bites, gently clean the paw with water or allow your dog to lick it clean.
- If the dog has been caught for a long time, take your dog to a vet.
- House the dog on soft surfaces while it recovers.

More information

Talk to your local vet for more information on the treatment of poisoned or injured animals.

First aid - 1080 and your dog. Available at:

www.pestsmart.org.au/first-aid-1080-and-your-dog/

Invasive Animals Ltd has taken care to validate the accuracy of the information at the date of publication [May 2016]. This information has been prepared with care but it is provided "as is", without warranty of any kind, to the extent permitted by law.