

Pet Emergency Care



24-Hour Emergency Services
858-875-7500

When Your Family Veterinarian is Unavailable and it Cannot Wait Until Tomorrow

We are a veterinary specialty and referral center dedicated to the specialized healthcare needs of your pet. We are working closely with your primary care veterinarian to provide a comprehensive array of medical, surgical, and diagnostic services for your pet.



This booklet has been created to help you cope with a medical emergency involving one of your pets. Please call Veterinary Specialty Hospital of San Diego at 858-875-7500 to request additional copies of this booklet or to answer your questions.



**VETERINARY SPECIALTY
HOSPITAL**

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24-Hour Emergency Services • Ophthalmology
Neurology/Neurosurgery • Radiation Oncology

How to Use this Booklet

This booklet is intended to help you deal with emergency situations that arise with your pet. It is not intended to replace professional veterinary care. The information presented will help you handle your pet's condition well enough to get them to a veterinary clinic for an exam and further treatment. The best way to manage an emergency is to be prepared – know where to take your pet and what numbers to call when you have questions. Research this information now (before you need it) and write it in this booklet.



10435 Sorrento Valley Road, San Diego, CA 92121
858-875-7500
www.vshsd.com

Disclaimer: The information contained in this booklet is meant to be used only as a general guide for the care of your pet.

In the case of an emergency involving your pet, a veterinarian should ALWAYS be consulted for recommendations specific to your pet's illness. VSH and the hospital supplying this booklet disclaim any responsibility for mistreatment of your pet that arises from the improper use of this booklet.

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How to Approach an Injured Animal

Approach the animal slowly while talking in a calm, soothing voice. ALWAYS muzzle an animal in pain or have someone restrain the head before examining the injured area. Try to assess the nature of the emergency as quickly as possible. Use the information in this book to help stabilize and transport the animal. Call a veterinarian as soon as possible and seek professional care for your pet immediately.

First Aid Kit

Carrying a few basic items can ease the stress of simple emergencies when away from home. Start with a small collection of the following:

tweezers, sterile saline (contact lens solution), roll gauze and gauze sponges, adhesive tape, antibiotic ointment, nylon leash, latex gloves

Household Medications

DO NOT give your pet any medications (Advil, Tylenol, aspirin, etc.) without checking with a veterinarian first. Many human drugs are toxic to animals and could preclude use of important medications to help your pet.

Abdominal Pain

Signs: Whining, listless/restless, lethargic, arching back, unable to get comfortable, vomiting/diarrhea, bloated or distended abdomen.

Action: **DO NOT** give your pet food or water – this may induce vomiting and make the condition worse. Abdominal pain can be very serious and is often life threatening if not addressed. Limit the activity of your pet, carry them if possible. You can put small pets in a box or carrier. Call a veterinarian and seek professional help as soon as possible.

Allergic Reactions

Signs: Fever, vomiting/diarrhea, hives, scratching, chewing at feet, swollen face or puffiness around eyes, trouble breathing.

Action: Call a veterinarian IMMEDIATELY. Allergic reactions should be treated as soon as possible to prevent shock. An exam by a veterinarian should still be performed on your pet, even if the reaction gets better. Allergic reactions can result from a variety of causes including insect bites or stings, food reactions and environmental issues.

Bite Wounds

Action: As always, approach the animal slowly. Injured animals often communicate their pain through aggressive or defensive actions. MUZZLE the animal or have someone restrain the head. Examine the entire animal for bleeding, lacerations or pain. Multiple bite wounds can be hard to find under thick coats and even bite wounds that appear superficial can cause extensive internal injuries (snake and spiderbites are particularly dangerous). Wounds that penetrate the abdomen or thorax require immediate veterinary care as they may cause serious internal injuries; such as organ laceration and bleeding.

Bite wounds often need to be flushed extensively or sutured to help prevent infection. Wounds that are managed within 6 hours require less intensive care. If you cannot quickly reach help, flush each wound with saline (clean water will do). Wrap large wounds, small wounds can be left uncovered. DO NOT use tourniquets to stop bleeding – use firm pressure if needed.

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Burns

Action: First aid for chemical, electrical or thermal (heat) burns. Immediately flush the area with cool water for 5 minutes. After flushing, apply a cool compress to the area for 10 to 15 minutes. NEVER apply an ice pack directly to the skin. Wrap the pack in a thin towel or available material. Call a veterinarian and seek professional help and examination. Burns need to be addressed immediately and can be life threatening when severe.

Cardiac Emergencies

Signs: Collapse, weakness, bluish or gray gum color, rapid/slow heart rate, increased respiratory rate or respiratory distress.

Action: Call and seek veterinary care IMMEDIATELY. Such emergencies should not be taken lightly as they are often life threatening. Limit your pet's activity, carry them if possible.

Cold Emergencies

Signs: Shivering (excessive, relentless), lethargy, weakness, inability to use limbs.

Action: Remove your pet from the wind and cold into a warm place. Wrap your pet in warm (woolen) and dry blankets or clothing. DO NOT rub your pet with the blankets, this can damage cold tissue and make frostbite worse. Try to raise your pet's body temperature slowly over the course of 20 minutes. Warm water bottles (wrapped in towels to avoid direct contact with skin) can be used under the blankets to help increase your pet's temperature. To take your pet's temperature, use only an approved rectal thermometer. Normal temperature should be

100 to 102.5 degrees. If an area is discolored (bluish or pale), the body part or skin may have been frozen and is exhibiting signs of frostbite. Take the animal out of the cold and transport to the nearest veterinary hospital. DO NOT use electric heat in any form.

Diarrhea

Action: Diarrhea can be due to stress or change in the animal's diet. (Diarrhea can often be a symptom of a more serious illness or disease.) Make sure that your pet continues to drink water. If the diarrhea persists for more than 24 hours, seek veterinary care. If your pet is showing other signs of illness (vomiting/lethargy/weakness) do not wait, seek veterinary care.

Ear Emergencies

Signs: Scratching at ears, shaking head, whining, head tilting, swollen/puffy ear flap, strange odor or discharge from ear(s).

Action: MUZZLE your pet or have someone hold the mouth closed while you examine the ears. Look for signs of redness, swelling of the ear flap, discharge or unusual odor. Look for any obvious foreign body (plant material, etc.) and pull it out if possible. If the signs of ear problems persist, call a veterinarian and have your pet seen as soon as possible to obtain the appropriate solution. If your pet is experiencing frequent ear infections, please discuss this with your veterinarian as there are usually underlying causes, such as allergies. Try to prevent your pet from scratching at the ears or shaking the head excessively as this can make the problem worse. Always avoid getting water in your dog's ears. Ask your family veterinarian for an ear 'drying' agent if your pet loves playing in water.

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Eye Emergencies

Signs: Squinting, discharge/tearing, redness, swelling, bleeding, different pupil size.

Action: If there is an obvious laceration or foreign object in or around the eye, seek veterinary care immediately. DO NOT try to bandage the laceration or remove the object. If the source of the irritation is known to be chemical or fine debris/dirt, flush the eye(s) with sterile saline (or clean water) immediately for 5 to 10 minutes and then seek veterinary care. Eye injuries and infections can get worse very quickly. IMMEDIATE diagnosis and treatment is critical in the preservation of your pet's eyesight.

Fractures

Signs: Pain, not using a limb, limb looks bent or swollen.

Action: MUZZLE the animal or have someone restrain the head. Check the limb for open wounds or bleeding. If excessive bleeding, apply pressure with a towel or other available material while trying not to move the limb. DO NOT pull on the limb in an attempt to align the fracture, such action can result in further injury and increased bleeding. Stabilize the limb as best as possible (carry your pet if possible) and seek professional help. DO NOT give any pain medications to your pet (some are toxic to animals) unless instructed to do so by a veterinarian. Avoid wrapping the leg, as it is easy to impede blood circulation.

Heat Emergencies and Dehydration

Signs: Excessive panting or salivation, lethargic, unable to stand, lack of coordination, vomiting, diarrhea.

Action: **Mild Discomfort:** Move your pet to a cool area as soon as possible. Keep them calm, DO NOT try to get them to stop panting, this is how your pet expels heat. If water is near by, encourage your pet to stand or lay down in cool water. Put small amounts of water on the tongue, or offer them ice cubes. If not vomiting, your pet should respond rapidly (10 to 15 minutes).

Significant Discomfort: If your pet does not respond to the cooling therapy, is depressed or anxious, great difficulty breathing, loss of consciousness or significant discomfort, seek veterinary care IMMEDIATELY. Dehydration of any cause can lead to shock or organ damage. Temperatures in your pet above 105.5° can be life threatening. Also, light colored animals can get sunburned just like people. Encourage them to stay in the shade and ask your veterinarian for a recommendation on sunblock for your pet.

Insect Bites and Tick Removal

Action: Like people, animals vary in their reactions to insect venom. The response can range from mild irritation to allergic shock. Check the area for any remaining stinger or insect, remove them and cleanse the area with soap and water. Cool wet towels or gauze can be used (for 20 to 30 minutes) to soothe the area. Watch your pet for signs of allergic reaction (see allergy section and follow the instructions if needed). Be particularly mindful of difficulties breathing. When returning from a park or a hike, check thoroughly for ticks by running your fingers through your pet's entire coat, and inspecting the paws, pads, between toes and

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inside floppy ears. If you find a tick, place a small amount of tick spray (alcohol, mineral oil or petroleum jelly can also be used) on a cottonball and hold it over the tick. Typically the tick will back out in 30–60 seconds allowing you to grab it with a tweezers and dispose of it. Apply alcohol or an antibiotic ointment to the site of the bite.

Lacerations

Action: As always, approach the animal slowly. Injured animals are often aggressive or defensive. MUZZLE the animal or have someone restrain the head. Examine the entire animal for bleeding, lacerations or pain. Multiple lacerations can be hard to find under thick fur. Flush each laceration with saline (clean water will do). Wrap large lacerations, small wounds can be left uncovered. DO NOT use tourniquets to stop bleeding, use firm pressure if needed. Seek veterinary care IMMEDIATELY. Lacerations can involve extensive internal damage and often need to be flushed extensively or sutured to help prevent infection.

Neurologic Emergencies

Signs: Inability to use limb(s), unable to stand, circling, seizures, head tilt, abnormal behavior.

Action: Seek veterinary care as soon as possible. Neurologic disease is difficult to treat and is often very serious. If your pet is unable to walk, carry them to the car. If they are too big to carry, use a towel (under the abdomen, in front of rear legs) to support the hindend or use a heavy blanket as a stretcher to carry them to the car. Professional diagnosis and treatment is recommended as soon as possible.

Poisonings

Signs: Disorientation, vomiting, seizures, weakness, retching, salivating (excessive), tremors, decreased mentation.

Action: CALL a veterinarian IMMEDIATELY. If the source of the poisoning is known, have the container with you when you call. You will need information on the packaging to determine the appropriate treatment. If the source is unknown, seek emergency assistance IMMEDIATELY. Anti-toxin treatment should be started as soon as possible to minimize absorption of the poison. If professional medical help is unavailable, veterinary POISON CONTROL offers assistance at (888) 426-4435 for a fee. Please make a note of the case number provided by poison control, your veterinarian will need it for reference. If possible, bring the toxic agent with you to the doctor.

Removing Skunk Odor

Signs: Awful smell and burning of the eyes.

Action: Put on goggles or other eye protection. In a bucket mix:
1 quart of 3% Hydrogen Peroxide; 1/4 cup baking soda;
1 teaspoon of hand-safe dishwashing liquid

Stir ingredients briefly. The solution will fizz as the hydrogen peroxide decomposes and releases bubbles of oxygen. Have a friend hold the smelly pet in a washtub while you scrub in the solution with a soft brush. Rinse the pet with tap water. Flush the eyes with sterile saline (or clean water) immediately for 5-10 minutes. If lethargy is present, seek veterinary help. You may need to repeat treatment on your friend.

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Respiratory Emergencies

Signs: Collapse, weakness, bluish or gray gum color, labored, rapid or shallow breathing.

Action: Call and seek veterinary care IMMEDIATELY. Difficulty breathing can result from heart failure, lung disease, and blockage of the airways. Such emergencies should not be taken lightly as they are often life threatening. Look in your pet's mouth, look for any foreign object that may be obstructing the airway. ONLY try to remove the object (with tweezers or pliers) if it is COMPLETELY stopping your pet from breathing. If they can still pass some air (wheezing) get them to a veterinary hospital as soon as possible. Limit your pet's activity, carry them if possible.

Seizures

Signs: Shaking (uncontrollably), tremors, strange facial movements, unable to stand, paddling (swimming action) with paws, loss of bowel or urinary control, loss of consciousness.

Action: DO NOT try to restrain your pet during an episode. Move objects away that may cause injury during the seizure. Call a veterinarian immediately. Try to get your pet to the veterinary hospital as soon as possible.

Snake Bites

In San Diego County we have 4 species of medically significant venomous snakes. These are all rattlesnakes and bites from these should be treated as medical emergencies. Identification is important, but not essential. The most common rattlesnake, the South Pacific Rattlesnake, is also the one responsible for the majority of venomous snakebites in our area.

Signs: Bleeding from the bite area, localized swelling and edema, edema of the muzzle and face, restlessness, agitation, painful to the touch, difficulty breathing.

Action: Be sure to keep your pet calm, wipe any excess venom away from the site of the bite. DO NOT cut, bandage or place hot/cold packs on the bite area. Avoid the snake that has caused the wound and do not attempt to catch or kill it. The majority of human rattlesnake bites result from people trying to catch or kill snakes.

Toxins (Common Household Items)

There are several items commonly found in many households that are toxic to pets. Make certain that these items are removed from ALL areas to which your pet has access.

1. **Antifreeze (ethylene glycol):** Pets love the sweet taste. The ingestion of a small amount can be fatal as the antifreeze will cause neurological and kidney damage. Signs of poisoning include staggering, lethargy, excessive drinking and seizures. An antidote exists but must be given soon after ingestion. Sierra brand anti-freeze is non-toxic to pets.
2. **Snail and Slug Bait:** Signs include nervousness, hyper-excitability, drooling, tremors, rapid heart rate, seizures.
3. **Chocolate:** Candy chocolate usually causes only GI upset. Baker's or bittersweet chocolate is much more toxic and if ingested may cause nervous stimulation, tremors, rapid heart rate and seizures.
4. **Raisins/Grapes:** Even in small quantity, can cause renal damage.
5. **Macadamia Nuts:** Causes neurological disorders.

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6. **Rat Poisons:** Some rat poisons cause bleeding whereas others cause severe neurological damage.
7. **Acetaminophen (Tylenol):** Causes red blood cell and liver damage, especially in cats.
8. **Plants:** There are many potentially toxic plants to pets. Some cause only mild gastrointestinal upset, whereas others can cause severe organ damage. Some common plants which may be toxic to pets include:
 - *Easter Lilly, Tiger Lilly:* Kidney damage to cats, GI signs.
 - *Rhododendron:* GI upset, slow heart rate and shock.
 - *Dumbcane, Dffenbackia:* Intense burning and swelling of mouth and tongue.
 - *Mistletoe:* GI upset, Liver damage.
 - *Oleander:* GI upset and heart damage.
 - *Castor Beans:* Severe GI upset, death.
 - *Rhubarb:* Neurologic disease.
 - *Iris:* GI upset.
 - *Larkspur:* GI upset and neurologic stimulation.

Urinary Emergencies

Signs: Frequent urination or straining, blood in urine, difficulty urinating, vomiting.

Action: Animals can develop urinary blockage and infections just like people. Once you have detected the signs of a problem, call your veterinarian and take your pet in as soon as possible. The problem most likely has been going on longer than you realized. DO NOT wait and observe the pet to see how they do.

Vital Signs

Taking a Heart Rate or Pulse: The heartbeat of a dog or cat can be felt at about the point where the left elbow touches the chest (about the fifth rib). Place your hand or stethoscope over this area and count the heartbeats for one minute. Pulses can also be felt with a light touch on the inner thigh approximately half way between the front and back of the leg, just below the wrist on the front legs or just below the ankle of the rear legs.

Normal Heart and Pulse Rates at Rest:

Small Breed Dogs: (< 30 lbs.): 100–160 beats per minute.

Medium to Large Breed Dogs: (30+ lbs.): 60–100 beats per minute.

Puppy (until 1 year old): 140–200 beats per minute.

Cats: 160–220 beats per minute.

Normal Breathing Rates:

Dogs: 10–30 breaths per minute and up to 200 pants per minute.

Cats: 20–30 breaths per minute. (Note: Panting in a cat can be a sign of serious illness and requires immediate veterinary attention.)

Normal Temperatures:

Dogs: 100°–102.5°F

Cats: 100°–102.5°F

Vomiting

Signs: Look for signs of foreign material or strange food in the vomit. When you call the veterinarian, let them know if your pet has eaten any foreign objects or new foods.

Actions: Rest the stomach for 4–6 hours by offering no food or water. Then try small amounts of water and bland food every two hours. If there is no further vomiting you can return your pet

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to a normal diet. IF THE VOMITING PERSISTS, or your pet has unproductive vomiting (retching) or abdominal distension, is lethargic, depressed or has severe diarrhea, see your veterinarian immediately.

Whelping/Queening

Dogs: If your dog experiences the following while in labor, call your veterinarian immediately;

4 hours of labor without puppies, 30 minutes of straining or 2 hours between puppies.

Cats: If your cat experiences the following while in labor, call your veterinarian immediately;

4 hours of labor without kittens or 30 minutes of straining.

Traveling With Your Pet

1. Have your veterinarian examine your pet prior to traveling to make certain he or she is physically able to handle the associated stress.
2. Familiarize yourself with any pet-related restrictions or requirements imposed by airlines, hotels and destination sites prior to traveling.
3. Remember to pack your pet's food and supplies (leashes, medications, water dishes, bedding, and litter).
4. Make certain that your pet is wearing identification tags at all times in case he or she becomes lost. Permanent identification microchips which are injected under the pet's skin are available from most veterinarians to be used to identify lost pets. Also carry a photo of your pet with you. Bring this emergency booklet, a first aid kit, and the phone number of your veterinarian in case an emergency should arise.

5. Dogs should not be allowed to stick their head out of a car window as flying debris can damage their eyes. Never leave the car window low or the door open when driving with your pet as an escape can occur. Never transport your dog in the back of an open pickup truck. Never leave your pet unattended in a parked car especially on hot days when heat stroke can occur.
6. When you arrive at your destination evaluate your pet for illness or injury. Seek veterinary advice immediately if something seems wrong.

Leaving Your Pet at Home:

If someone is taking care of your pet while you are away, be certain to leave a phone number where you can be reached as well as the phone number of your veterinarian and VSH. Make certain the pet-sitter is aware of any health issues. Finally, "permission to treat forms" which note financial limitations (available at VSH) should be signed and made available to the pet-sitter in case you are not available when an emergency occurs.

Dog Parks in San Diego Area

- Rancho Bernardo Park, Rancho Bernardo – 18448 West Bernardo Drive
- Wells Park, El Cajon – 1153 E. Madison Avenue
- Dog Beach, Ocean Beach – West end of the Ocean Beach Flood Control Channel
- Fiesta Island, Mission Bay – Central island in Mission Bay off of Fiesta Island Road
- Nate's Point, Balboa Park – Balboa Drive at El Prado
- Morley Field, Balboa Park – East side of Balboa Park, northwest of the tennis courts

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- Dog Beach, Coronado – Ocean Boulevard near Sunset Park
- Poway Dog Park, Poway – 13094 Bowron Road
- Dog Beach, Del Mar – off-leash September-June, located off of Camino del Mar
- Harry Griffen Park, La Mesa – 9550 Milden Street

Dog Park Etiquette

1. Always keep your eyes on your dog. Mischief can happen quickly.
2. Never leave your dog unattended.
3. Be sure your dog is current on vaccines and has a valid license.
4. Always clean up after your dog.
5. Do not take puppies younger than four months to the dog park.
6. Do not take more than three dogs to the park at one time.
7. Keep your dog on-leash until you get to the off-leash area.
8. If your dog becomes unruly or plays rough, leash the dog and leave immediately.
9. If you take children to the dog park supervise them closely.
10. Always observe all of the rules posted at the dog park.
11. Make certain your pet has proper I.D.

Adopt Your Favorite Pet From:

- **Camp Pendleton Animal Shelter**
4th St. Area 25 Building 25132, Camp Pendleton, CA 92054
760-725-8120
- **County of San Diego Department of Animal Services**
www.sddac.com
- **Central County Shelter**
5480 Gaines Street, San Diego, CA 92110 619-236-4250
- **North County Shelter**
2481 Palomar Airport Road, Carlsbad, CA 92011 760-438-2312
- **South County Shelter**
5821 Sweetwater Road, Bonita, CA 91902 619-236-4250
- **City of Chula Vista Animal Care Facility**
130 Beyer Way, Chula Vista, CA 91911 619-691-5123
- **City of El Cajon Shelter**
1275 N. Marshal Avenue, El Cajon, CA 92020 619-441-1580
- **Escondido Humane Society**
www.escondidohumanesociety.org
3450 East Valley Parkway, Escondido, CA 92027 760-888-BARK
- **Friends of Cats**
www.friendsofcats.org
15587 Olde Highway 80, El Cajon, CA 92021 619-561-0361

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- **Helen Woodward Animal Care and Education Center**
www.animalcenter.org 858-756-4117
6461 El Apajo Road, PO Box 64, Rancho Santa Fe, CA 92067
- **National Cat Protection Society**
www.natcat.org
9031 Birch Street, Spring Valley, CA 91977
- **North County Humane Society and SPCA**
www.nchumane.org
2905 San Luis Rey Road, Oceanside, CA 92054 760-757-4357
- **Rancho Coastal Humane Society**
www.rchumanesociety.org
389 Requeza Street, Encinitas, CA 92024 760-753-6413
- **San Diego Humane Society and SPCA**
www.sdhumane.org
5500 Gaines Street, San Diego, CA 92110 619-299-7012

Important Numbers for Your Pet

- **ASPCA – Animal Poison Control Center:** 888-426-4435
- **Veterinary Specialty Hospital of San Diego –** 858-875-7500
- **Lost Pet Information Programs –** 1-800-HELP-4-PETS
www.help4pets.com
- **Pet Loss and Grief – UC Davis Pet Loss Support Hotline:**
1-800-565-1526

Important Information for Your Pet

Pet's Name _____

Cat /Dog / Other _____ Breed _____ Male / Female _____

Spayed / Neutered _____ Age _____ Color _____

Pet's Name _____

Cat /Dog / Other _____ Breed _____ Male / Female _____

Spayed / Neutered _____ Age _____ Color _____

Pet's Name _____

Cat /Dog / Other _____ Breed _____ Male / Female _____

Spayed / Neutered _____ Age _____ Color _____

Owner's Name _____ Phone _____

Owner's Address _____ Zip _____

Cell Phone _____ Work Phone _____

Medical Alerts _____ Chip Number _____

Medications _____ Time(s) Given _____

Veterinarian's Name _____ Phone _____

Veterinarian's Address _____ Hours _____

Groomer's Name _____ Phone _____

Pet-Sitter _____ Phone _____

Emergency Contact _____ Phone _____

Emergency Contact _____ Phone _____



VETERINARY SPECIALTY H O S P I T A L

Just as your family physician may suggest that you see a specialist to investigate a problem or receive a special treatment, your family care veterinarian may suggest that your pet see a veterinary specialist. VSH offers a team of board certified veterinary specialists for your pet's specific medical needs.

Our comprehensive services include:

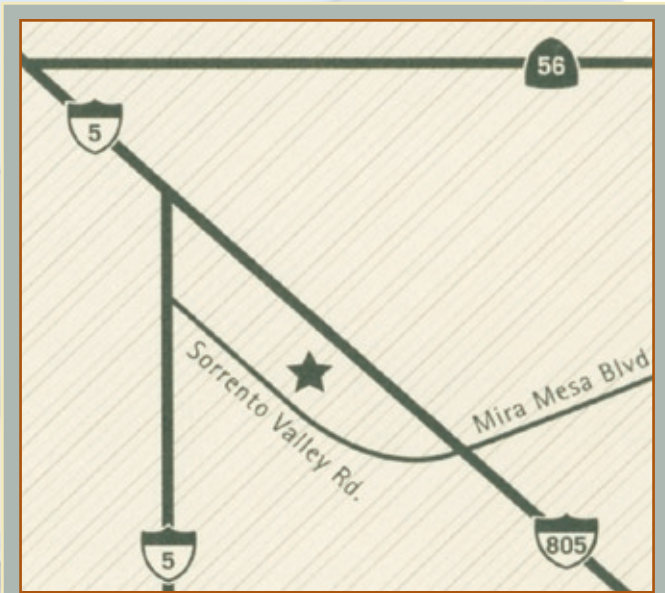
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- Neurology/Neurosurgery
- Ophthalmology
- Radiation Oncology
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**Veterinary Specialty Hospital is here to serve
your pet's emergency and critical care needs
24 hours a day, 365 days a year!**

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FROM DOWNTOWN SAN DIEGO I-805

Exit Sorrento Valley Rd. Take the first right onto Vista Sorrento Pkwy. Take the first right onto Sorrento Valley Rd. The building is located (0.6 miles) on the right.

FROM DOWNTOWN SAN DIEGO I-5

Exit Sorrento Valley Rd. Take the first left onto Roselle St. Take the first right onto Sorrento Valley Blvd. Take the first right onto Sorrento Valley Rd. The building is located (0.6 miles) on the left.

FROM NORTH COUNTY

Take I-5, stay on the left lanes and transition onto the I-805 South. Exit Sorrento Valley Rd. and make a right. The building is located (0.5 miles) on the right.

FROM I-15

Take the 56 West to the I-5 South. Merge into the far right lane and transition onto the I-805 South. Exit Sorrento Valley Rd. and make a right. The building is located (0.5 miles) on the right.

SATELLITE FACILITY IN ESCONDIDO

Please refer to www.vshsd.com for directions.

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