

Bob article

***This week's article from the team at Tararua Veterinary Services is about the 'Golden Hour'.***

In human medicine there is a concept referred to as the "Golden Hour". This is the period of time during which a patient should receive medical attention for the best possible outcome (or even survival).

In Veterinary medicine the same concept applies although the golden hour can be anything from 20 minutes to 2 days. Often times with animals injuries or illnesses the owner doesn't realize the seriousness of the animal's condition and valuable time can be lost when they leave, rest or just keep an eye on their animal – this time can markedly impact the success of any treatment given. Some common examples are:

**Twisted stomachs:** This is probably the number one emergency situation in companion animal medicine. Deep- chested dogs such as Huntaways, Great Danes and Basset Hounds are particularly prone to Gastric Dilatation and Torsion (GDV or twisted stomach). Any dog that is blown up in the belly must receive veterinary attention as soon as possible. Around 50% of afflicted dogs don't even make it to the Veterinary Clinic and a high percentage will go on to die on the surgery table or within a few days of surgery.

**Blocked bladders:** Most commonly seen in castrated male cats. This occurs when the tube from the bladder to the outside becomes blocked with crystals. The cat will be in extreme pain, licking at his back end and straining. If he does not receive veterinary attention as soon as possible then toxaemia, kidney failure, bladder damage or even rupture and death can occur.

**Joint injuries:** In dogs the most commonly injured joints that we encounter are the stifle joint (knee) and the hock joint (ankle). While an injury to the hock joint is usually obvious (swelling and displacement of the joint) injuries to the stifle ligaments can be more subtle. The most common cause of a stifle injury is a working dog getting hung up in a fence. Sometimes in pet dogs the ligaments will rupture spontaneously without any obvious accident. Sometimes the ligaments may have only been partially ruptured and later go on to rupture fully. Generally the dog will initially be acutely lame and holding the leg up. This is the point when it should be taken to the vet. Often the owner may rest the dog for a few days and it will appear to get better but after a couple of weeks will be favouring the leg again. What is happening is the tissue surrounding the joint thickens up in an attempt to stabilize the joint, this helps initially but then arthritis rapidly sets in. When the Vet is presented with a joint that has been injured for some time, diagnosis and treatment are made much more difficult and the chances of a good outcome are reduced.

**Skin wounds:** Obviously animals with serious bleeding should be taken to the vet straight away but even minor skin wounds will heal much better if they are taken to the vet within a couple of hours of happening. Wounds that have been left untreated for a day or two will dry out and don't heal as well.

**Broken bones:** Most broken bones won't be operated on straight away but the animal should still be taken to the vet as promptly as possible. The animal may be in shock, bleeding or there may be other hidden injuries, eg rupture diaphragm in run over pets. These other conditions need to be treated first

Constipation: A common problem in dogs. Mild constipation can be relieved at home with the use of laxatives such as paraffin or Duplalac but if a dog still cant poo after a couple of days then he needs to see the vet. (don't wait until 4 pm on Friday afternoon). If left, chronic constipation can result in permanent bowel damage and even death.