

First Aid For Falcons in Training and Hunting

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Falconers in the Middle East and Europe are generally very well informed about diseases in falcons. Also, they are often used to giving medications to their birds. However, there is only rudimentary preparation to cope with frequently occurring injuries or accidents during training or hunting in the field. This lack of information, experience and equipment has proved fatal in many falcons, which could have been saved, if the falconer was aware of first aid. In order to improve this situation and to give the falconer necessary equipment and tools at hand, a First Aid Box for Falcons including a First Aid Brochure was developed by the author to cater for the most frequent accidents during training and hunting trips. Practical first aid seminars for falconers are being conducted by the Abu Dhabi Falcon Hospital every year to assist in establishing and training the first aid skills to everyone interested and/or concerned.

First-Aid Box:

The First Aid Box is designed in a small and handy way to be kept inside the car. It contains the most important materials and medicines to cope with injuries and accidents as well as lost tailmounts. Each falconer is encouraged to put additional items inside which he might require or find useful for this purpose.

First-aid Kit: Materials

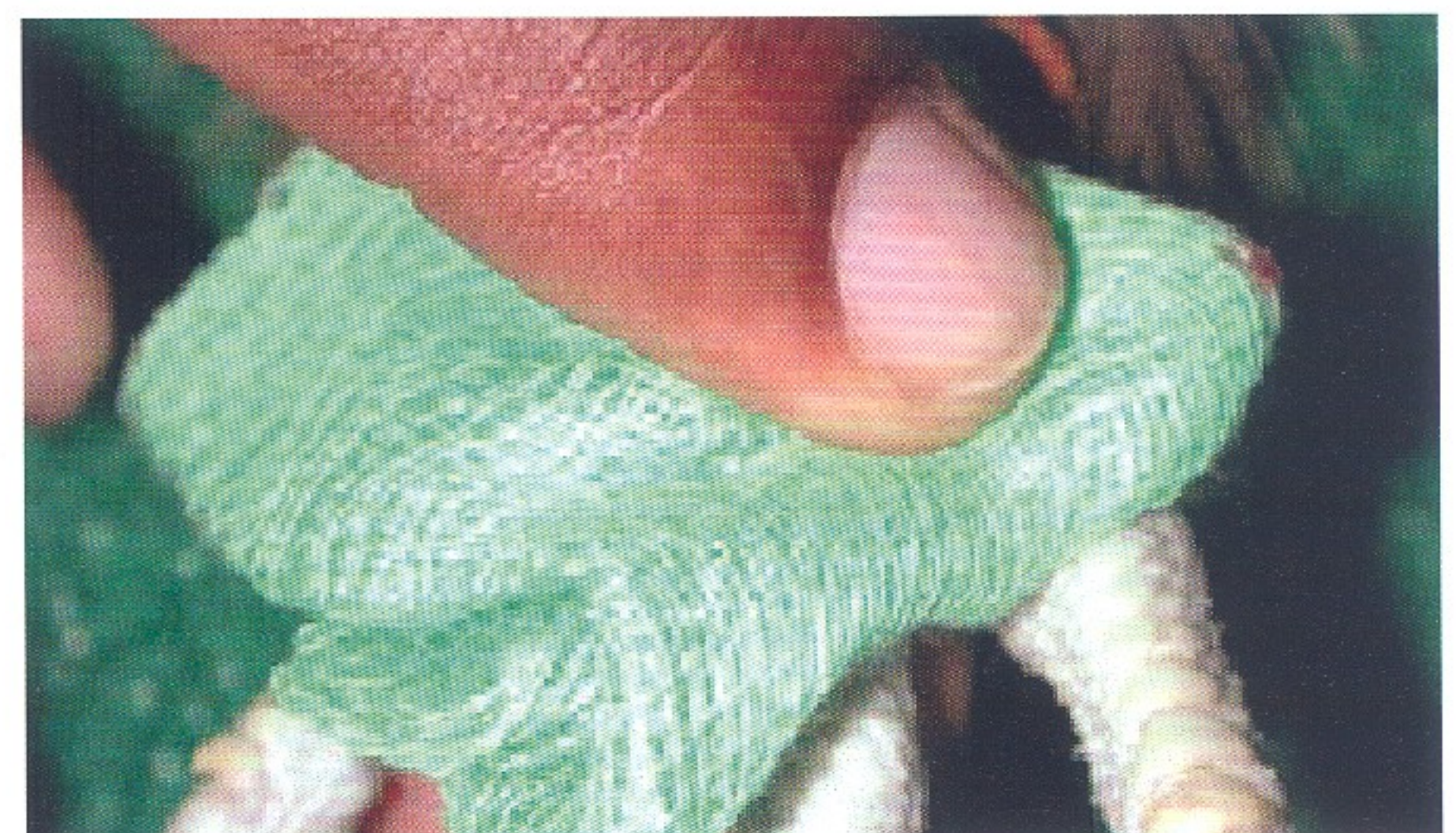
- Gauze, Gauze Bandages, Self-Adhesive Bandages, Cotton Balls for wound management and pressure bandages in heavy bleeding cases
- Cotton Buds useful in cleaning small wounds
- Gloves to protect the falconers skin and the falcon from possible contamination
- Syringe (1ml, 10ml, 20ml) and Sterile Saline to be used to give birds fluids and to flush dirty wounds with saline
- Iodine Pads to clean and disinfect dirty wounds
- Non adhesive dressing e.g. Melolin to cover the wound after application of iodine cream or wound powder.
- Silver nitrate stick to stop bleeding of the beak or talons
- Superglue and Tailmount: the superglue helps to fix the tailmount to the falcon's tail feather
- Pliers help you to bring the tailmount in shape before and after gluing
- Bamboo Stick can be put into the shaft of the broken feather for imping. After measuring the bamboo stick you cover it with superglue and re-insert the bamboo stick into the feather

First-aid Kit: Medicines

- Eye cleaning lotion for washing out dirt or foreign bodies from the eye
- Eye drops for eye inflammation due to sand etc
- Antibiotic wound powder for wet wounds
- Iodine cream can be applied on a clean, not too deep wound that should be covered with Melolin afterwards
- Foot cream for daily massaging the falcons feet

General information about emergencies

- all emergencies require immediate, but well-thought and careful help
- be always confident in what you are doing
- train and follow procedures step by step
- avoid time loss or there is more stress for the falcon
- learn how to handle the first aid kit, as this will save precious time and might save the life of your falcon



Shock

Shock symptoms are fluffed feathers, not moving and rapid shallow breathing. The head of the falcon may be turned with eyes partly closed. Place the falcon in a quiet, warm, secluded, dark environment. If the falcon is not able to stand anymore, prepare a towel to keep her in comfortable position. Keep the head a little bit higher than the body to prevent her from inhaling vomited food, blood or mucous. If the shock is accompanied by life threatening injuries (e.g. massive bleeding), treat these immediately. In cases of no visible life threatening injuries, it is advisable to leave the falcon undisturbed. In all cases it is recommended to call the veterinarian immediately!

Eye Injuries

In all cases of eye injuries, it is better to keep the falcon away from intense (sun)light. If sand or dirt is inside the eye, flush the eye with eye cleansing lotion, clean water or sterile Saline in a syringe without needle. Then put ophthalmic eye drops in the eye. In cases of foreign bodies in the eye that are not puncturing the eye, you can try to float them out with eye cleansing lotion or ophthalmic drops. If the foreign body is puncturing the eye, it is advisable to leave it in its place as any treatment other than by a veterinarian can cause a massive damage. The falcon should be brought to the veterinarian.

Heat Stroke

If your falcon is suffering from heat stroke, her feathers should be sprayed with cold water and her feet put in cold water. It is advisable to place the overheated falcon in a cold room or car with air-conditioning and to watch her for signs of shock. After cooling her down, you can wrap her loosely in towel to prevent chill. Be very careful when applying cool water by not putting cool water for a too long time as otherwise the falcon will cool out completely. This may lead to severe problems.

Dehydration

Dehydration of falcons in cases of overtraining and starvation can often be observed in hunting falcons especially in warmer countries like in the Middle East. You can test the degree of dehydration in your falcon by making a skin fold on the foot. Dehydrated falcons need a prolonged time for the skin to return in its normal position. To improve the dehydration level you can give water mixed with special vitamins containing glucose or fructose orally or over the food. Moreover, you can spray water over the falcon's body and in the mouth.

Wound management

Small wounds up to 0.5 cm length

After cleaning the wound area gently with the Iodine Pads, you can apply wound powder to stop the bleeding. If the

bleeding is a little bit heavier, you can cover the wound with gauze pads and hold firm pressure on the wound for two to three minutes and to leave the gauze on. If the cut is on the falcon's leg or feet, apply antibiotic ointment, then bandage the wound loosely.

Large wounds of more than 0.5 cm length or infected wounds

Clean the wound area gently with Iodine pads and then dry the wound. If heavy bleeding occurs, cover the wound with sterile gauze pads and hold firm pressure on the wound for at least two to three minutes. Then apply antibiotic wound powder, cover it with sterile non adhesive dressing and bandage it more tightly. Try to bring the falcon to a veterinarian as soon as possible as the wound requires surgical closure.

Fractures

In case of open fractures, the fractures should always be covered with sterile gauze to avoid contamination and infection. All falcons with fractures should be brought to the veterinarian as soon as possible. Nevertheless first aid might help until you reach a veterinarian.

Wing fractures should be carefully and gently wrapped in a figure eight bandage on the wing and bandage should be fixed in the normal wing position.

Leg fractures can be stabilised by sticks made out of tree or bush branches. First the sticks should be measured and cut to a proper size and then wrapped with cotton balls for each side of the leg. Then stabilize the leg with sticks wrapped with cotton balls on each side of the leg and bandage them carefully. It often helps to provide towels for transport to the veterinarian.

Outlook

The author hopes that more falconers will be encouraged to enhance their skills in first aid for their falcons in order to save valuable time for injured falcons.

Please note:

A first aid procedure cannot replace the visit to a veterinarian, but it may increase the chances of the falcons for a successfully injury management.



إسعافات أولية للصقور أثناء التدريب والقنص

طبيب بيطري/ مارجيت جابريل مولر (عضو الكلية الملكية للجراحين البيطريين)

قام المؤلف بتطوير صندوق إسعافات أولية للصقور يتضمن نشرة إسعافات أولية لكي يتيح بين يدي الصقارين المعدات والمستلزمات الضرورية للتعامل مع أكثر الحوادث والإصابات شيوعاً أثناء رحلات التدريب والقنص (الصيد). وأهم المواد والأدوية المقترحة احتواء "صندوق الإسعافات الأولية" عليها مدون بالتفصيل؛ كما أن هناك إرشادات حول كيفية علاج الصدمة، وإصابات العين، والصدمة الحرارية، والجفاف، والكسور، والجروح، ومتى يجب استشارة الطبيب البيطري.