



Summertime Safety Tips

When good weather arrives people naturally want to spend more time outdoors, and so does man's hazards for our pets, and unfortunately they are not aware of the dangers of a long hot summer. They need our help to be safe.



Heatstroke

Heatstroke can be the serious and often fatal result of an animal's prolonged exposure to excessive heat. Below are the signs of heatstroke and the actions you should take if your pet is overcome.

Early Stages:

- Heavy panting
- Rapid breathing
- Excessive drooling
- Bright red gums and tongue
- Standing 4-square, posting or spreading out in an attempt to maintain balance.

Advanced Stages:

- White or blue gums
- Lethargy, unwillingness to move
- Uncontrollable urination or defecation
- Labored, noisy breathing
- Shock

If your pet begins to exhibit signs of heatstroke, you should **CALL YOUR VETERINARIAN IMMEDIATELY** and try to cool the dog down:

- Apply rubbing alcohol to the paw pads
- Apply ice packs to the groin area
- Hose down with water (for very small breeds use lukewarm water; for larger breeds cold water may be used)
- Allow the dog to lick ice chips or drink a small amount of water
- Offer Pedialyte to restore electrolytes

CAUTION: Cooling must take place gradually. Cooling too quickly or allowing the body temperature to become too low can cause other life-threatening medical conditions.

Check your dog's temperature regularly during this process. Once the dog's temperature has stabilized at between 100 to 102 degrees, you can stop the cool-down process.

Travel Safety

Never leave your pet unattended in a parked car. When it's only 80 degrees outside, the inside of a car can heat up to more than 120 degrees **in just minutes**. Leaving the windows partially rolled down will not help. Parked cars, even if they are in the shade, can heat up like ovens. Your pet is susceptible to heat stroke and possible death in these conditions.

Bites and Stings

Insect stings are another potential summer hazard for your pet. If your pet is stung near its mouth or in its throat the airway may swell and restrict breathing. Some animals may also be allergic to bee and wasp stings and quickly collapse. Hives and a swollen face are some other signs of an allergic reaction. If you think your pet may have been stung in the mouth area, check that the airway is clear and take it to the vet immediately.

**Benadryl may be given at 1mg per pound of body weight (example: 50lb dog could be given 50mg of Benadryl) to buy time until you get to the vet.



Sunbathing



If your pet likes to loll in the sun, soaking up the warming rays, you need to watch that he doesn't become overheated, or even sunburned. It's a good idea to encourage your pet into the shade during the hottest part of the day. Or if he refuses to stay in the shade, perhaps it is safer to keep him indoors for a few hours (between 11am and 2pm), and preferably until the temperature has cooled down later in the afternoon. And ALWAYS make sure there is fresh water readily available at all times.

Dogs: If you allow your dog to 'sunbathe' in a glassy conservatory, or similar area with a lot of windows, make sure that the temperature does not rise too high, and do not leave the dog unsupervised for long periods of time. Also, ensure that the dog can retreat to a cool, shady area at all times.

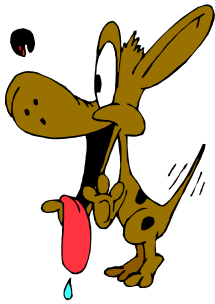
Cats: Cats don't seem very 'sensible' when it comes to heat. You'll see them toasting themselves by the fire in winter, and in summer they will lay in the sun for far longer than is safe for them. Stone paths and patios can get very hot during the day and may even cause burns to tender, thin furred tummies. Glass cold frames and greenhouses can also be a danger for sun-seeking cats. A cat may sunbathe inside a greenhouse as the temperature rises to dangerous levels, and may become trapped inside if the door shuts on it. Glass and metalwork can also get very hot, as your cat may discover to its cost if it basks on top of a cold frame. Flimsy glass may even break under the weight of a basking cat.

Sun block: Try to prevent sunburn damage from occurring in the first place. If your pet is white or has a pale nose or ears, buy some sun block for your pet. You should apply it to the vulnerable spots every day, and more frequently if your pet is outside in the sun for long periods of time.

Use a sunscreen that is known to be non-toxic to dogs/cats - your vet will be able to advise you if you're unsure. This is because dogs/cats have a natural inclination to lick off anything that is applied to their fur and skin - making non-toxic products vital. It also means that you may need to apply your pet's sun block several times a day. If you see an unidentified lesion on your pet's skin, ask your vet to take a look at it, in case it is skin cancer. Skin cancer can often be successfully removed if caught early.



Outdoor Activity



Hiking: When hiking, keep the pet on a leash to prevent encounters with wild animals. If attacked, the pet may not only suffer severe injuries from a skunk, raccoon, snake or bear, but may be exposed to the Rabies virus. Make sure the pet's Rabies vaccination is current before the trip. Ticks and mosquitoes carry diseases and heartworms. Preventative measures should be discussed with your veterinarian. ALWAYS take fresh water with you and your pet wherever you go.

Also, make sure that any pavement is NOT TOO HOT - think of your dog as being "barefoot" all of the **time, their pads can burn and be very painful.

Swimming: If your pet enjoys swimming (like most dogs do), as an owner you want to be cautious of what type of water your pet is swimming in. If your pet likes to swim in rivers or streams, be aware of currents - it is very easy to be swept away in a rapid current. If your pet likes to swim in ponds, be sure it is not stagnant - various diseases can arise from stagnant water (leptospirosis, giardiasis, and intestinal parasites). Avoid cedar water as well, for it can cause gastrointestinal upset if ingested in large quantities.

Poisoning

An animal's own yard can be hazardous to his health in the summer. Herbicides (weed killers), insecticides, rodent poison, and slug and snail bait can all be poisonous. Pet owners should be sure to follow manufacturers' directions and keep their pets out of treated yards for several days. Many garden plants are also toxic such as azalea, bleeding heart, delphinium, English ivy, hydrangea and iris.

First Aid

If you take your dog on more country walks during the summer, it is particularly important to frequently inspect your pet from head to toe for cuts and sore spots as these can quickly become infected. Check the paw pads for tar from melting roads and pavements, or sharp stones lodged between the pads. If your pet shows signs of irritation always try to find the cause, and seek veterinary advice and treatment if necessary. It is also a good idea to check for ticks on a regular basis because they can carry diseases. Ticks can be found everywhere, including your own backyard.