



Summer Safety for Dogs

Warm weather offers tons of opportunities to have fun with your best furry friend. Summer also poses additional hazards to your pets. The following safety tips will help ensure you and your dog enjoy a safe summer.

Heatstroke is the most imminent danger when days are hot. Symptoms include heavy, loud breathing, staggering gait and a bright red tongue or gums. If you think your dog may have heatstroke, apply cold water to his belly and legs, and call the vet immediately. The most common ways dogs get heatstroke is from being left in cars – brain damage can occur within 10 minutes – or from exercising in mid-day heat. On hot days, leave your dog at home and exercise during coolest hours only; early morning and late evening. Also, always carry a plenty of cool, fresh water when traveling with your pet. Be especially sensitive to older and overweight dogs. Brachycephalic or snub-nosed breeds, as well as those with health issues, should be kept cool in air-conditioned rooms as much as possible.

Drowning – Hundreds of dogs drown each year. Not all dogs are natural swimmers and many tire easily in the water. Never leave a dog unattended in swimming areas. If your dog is insistent on drinking pool water, put him inside. The chemicals can cause GI upset. Make sure all pets wear flotation devices on boats.

Sunburn – Yes, dogs can get sunburn too. Especially those with thinner coats. The areas on dogs most prone to sunburn are the nose, face and ear tips. Dogs that like to lie on their back in the sun can also get painful burns on the belly. Sunscreen specifically for pets is available at pet supply stores. Never have long-haired dogs shaved down to the skin as this robs them of their protective coat. Having fur trimmed to on-inch length and consistent brushing will help keep them cooler. Simply limiting exposure is the easiest, cheapest way to avoid the sun's harmful rays.

Around Town - In very high temperatures, don't let your dog standing on hot asphalt. His body can heat up quickly, and sensitive paw pads can burn. Try to keep him on grass and keep walks during these times to a minimum. Steer clear of areas that may have been sprayed with insecticides or other chemicals. Watch for coolant or other automotive fluid leaking from vehicles. Ingesting even a small amount can be fatal.

At Home – The smells coming from a hot grill can be awfully tempting. Do not leave pets unattended anywhere near grills or open flames. Also, keep matches, lighter fluid, citronella candles and insect coils out of pets' reach. Make sure that there are no open, unscreened windows or doors through which animals can fall or jump.

Please make sure your dog's vaccinations and medications are up to date. With increased exposure to nature comes an increased risk of fleas and ticks, as well as encounters with other **parasites** and disease. Check for ticks and fleas on your pet daily. Do not use any insect repellent product to your pet that is not labeled specifically for use on animals.

Awareness of potential hazards and use of common sense will help keep your dog happy and healthy in warmer climates. Specific questions about your dog's health should always be discussed with your veterinarian.