

SUMMER PET CARE



"It's summertime and the livin' is easy," goes the refrain, but that actually is not the case for our pets. In reality there are so many dangers that our vigilance must be heightened in this season.

- Access to shade and fresh water is a necessity.
- Be aware that dogs perspire only through their tongues and pads of their feet and the combination of energetic activity with hot, humid temperatures can be dangerous. Dogs can get so enthusiastic that they run and play without concern, so it is up to the owner to stop the activity before there is heatstroke.
- Fleas and ticks may become a problem. Examine coats daily, and use preventatives, dips or shampoos when indicated. Gently place your pet on his back, and if you discover what looks like ground pepper on his tummy he most likely is infested with fleas. Flea dermatitis allergy should be diagnosed and treated by a veterinarian. Check ears and skin often. Hot, humid weather promotes the growth of fungus.
- Heartworm preventative should be used according to instructions.
- Supervise all outdoor play. Don't allow your pets to wander. Pets eat stones, ropes, plastic, and other "toys" that may cause an intestinal blockage, which requires surgery to extricate. They also eat plants that are poisonous. They chase and eat toads that exude poisonous substances. Venomous snakebites are not uncommon in the summer. Bees sting. Some pets are allergic to those stings and it is crucial that they get professional care within a short time of the incident to survive. If asked, your veterinarian may dispense a bee sting kit to you in syringes measured with the correct dosages for the pet's weight for pets that are particularly vulnerable. When you get your kit ask for directions to use it, and make sure you know how to use each labeled medication properly. Store it in the refrigerator.
- Dawn and dusk are times when mosquitoes are especially prevalent. If possible keep your pets indoors at those times of day.
- Don't allow your dog to ride in the car with his head sticking out the open window. I know he loves it, but flying debris is apt to get in his eyes. Several instances have taken place when a passing vehicle decapitated the dog. If the provocation is strong enough he can jump out of the window to chase something and be killed in traffic. The safest way to travel with a pet is to secure him in a crate. Do not leave your dog in a vehicle unless a window is open to prevent a temperature build-up that can be dangerous. In fact, it is better to leave the dog at home if you are planning on doing errands.
- Riding in the back of an open pick-up truck without being secured invites tragedy also. The dog can easily jump off, or be thrown out when the vehicle is making a sharp turn.
- Walking or hiking with your dog is fun, but he should be on leash. Carry a supply of plastic bags so when he defecates you can be a good neighbor by picking up after him.
- If you want your dog to accompany you when you swim in a privately owned pool, teach him how to climb the steps to get out. Drowning is the result of carelessness. Of course, all pools should be fenced and gated.

Pets are great companions. However it is the good citizen responsible for his well being who will make the difference between a happy summer and a tragic one. *Barbara Axel ~ NCRAOA*

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