

Are Swimming Pools Dangerous for your Pets?

Many of us enjoy a swim in a refreshing pool during the hot summer months. Our pets may enjoy a swim as well. I have a yellow Lab named Sunny that not only swims, but also does some serious diving for Frisbees and other toys. Our pool is five feet deep, and Sunny is about 27 inches tall, but she is an excellent swimmer and water-lover supreme. She is fearless, and swims laps both in our pond and our pool. She would have little problem swimming 24/7 throughout the year (we live in Texas, so our winters are generally quite moderate.) She also knows how to get out of the pool via the shallow end and up the stairs. However, other kinds of dogs do not necessarily possess a natural ability to swim and may not be able to get out of a swimming pool.

There are some dangers posed by swimming pools that could prove harmful – even fatal to your pet. Here are some ideas that can keep your pet safe this summer:

- 1). Assess your dog's ability to swim. Although most dogs have the ability to swim, this doesn't mean yours is one of them. Old age, physical disabilities such as blindness or limited vision or other limitations can hinder your pet's ability to survive in the pool.
- 2). If your dog displays an interest in getting in the pool, show him how to get in and out. Repeatedly show him and familiarize him with the shallow end and the steps that lead out. You may even want to install pet steps or a pet ramp (incline), which is hooked onto the sidewall of the pool if your pet has trouble climbing stairs.
- 3). Monitor your pets around a pool – just as you would children. Even if they are familiar with the location of a pool, they may inadvertently fall in.
- 4). A pool alarm will alert you to the sound of the surface water and water below being disturbed. There are many types of pool alarms- many have adjustable levels of sensitivity-that will alert you to danger.
- 5). Chlorine can irritate a pet's eyes as well as their ears and lungs. Check your pet periodically for signs of irritation to the chlorine in the water.
- 6). Use eco-friendly products to clean your pool that are also pet-friendly. Converting your pool to a saltwater pool is a healthy alternative to one that is chlorinated and cleaned with other chemicals that aren't pet-friendly.
- 7). After a swim, make certain to rinse off your pet with fresh, clean water. Always have some fresh, clean drinking water available and accessible for your dog.
- 8). Make sure that the pool water is not too cold for your pet and that he does not develop hypothermia.

9). Limit your pet's time in the pool as well as in the hot sun.

10). If your pool is surrounded by concrete, brick or tile, guide your four-footed friend to a shaded, grassy area where he can rest after swimming and where his paws won't get burned.

Enjoy the pool with your dog – he may even want to swim alongside you. My friends and I play water games with Sunny, and we have a lot of fun swimming together!