

Summer Pet Care & Safety

For so many of us, summer arrives not a moment too soon. After a long, dreary winter, we have looked forward to the rewards and relaxation associated with the warm summer months. Perhaps we have planned a vacation near a lake, river or the ocean. Perhaps we are planning on swimming, hiking, boating and bicycling or perhaps just sprucing up the backyard or catching up on our reading under a shady tree. More than likely, we are planning a lot of outdoor activities and entertaining. We may also be planning to engage in activities involving our animal companions. After all, summer is a wonderful time to spend increased quality playtime and exercise time with our pets. However, it is also a time when we need to be aware of some unique potential hazards to our pet's safety and well-being.

We may enjoy taking our dogs for rides in the car – some pets can't seem to get enough of the wind blowing through their fur and the visual and oral stimulation that comes along with traveling so speedily through so many different parts of the city and/or countryside. However, as much as we enjoy bringing our pets with us on errands and rides, it is very important to remember that during warm weather, the inside of your car can reach 120 degrees in a matter of minutes and that countless pets suffer from heat stroke or heat exhaustion, brain damage and death as their owners leave them in the car “for just a few minutes.”

Dogs should be walked during the early morning and early to later evening hours to spare them discomfort and adverse affects from the heat. They should be provided with plenty of healthy, cool water and shade whenever they are outside during the heat. They should be checked upon frequently to make certain they are not overheated or suffering from dehydration.

Pets need exercise even when it's hot outside, but they are susceptible to getting sunburn also. It is a good idea to put sunscreen on their most vulnerable areas, i.e. noses, ear tips. Etc. Pets with light colored fur are particularly vulnerable to sun burn or skin cancer.

A serious summer safety hazard is posed by ticks and fleas. Use flea and tick medication that is recommended by your veterinarian.

Another very serious health risk is posed by heartworms, which are transmitted by mosquitoes. All dogs and cats should be treated with veterinarian recommended heartworm prevention medication. An advanced case of heartworm disease can prove not only dangerous but also fatal to your pet.

It is not a good idea to take your pet to crowded summer fairs, festivals, or other concerts or outdoor events. The commotion in conjunction with the heat can make your pet ill as well as confused. Always remember to make sure your pet is wearing a collar and identification tag and that he is on a leash.

If you are planning on being in or near a swimming pool, make sure that your pet is supervised and cannot fall in and drown. Never allow your pet free access to a pool, lake or river.

If you are planning on working in your garden, make certain that your pet does not ingest fertilizer or pesticides. These can prove highly toxic, harmful, and even fatal.

Sharing the fun of the summer season with your pet can be gratifying for both of you. Following this simple advice may ensue that you and your pet will enjoy many other summers together.