



Sizzlin' Summer Hazards for Pets



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When summer is approaching and people are headed outside to enjoy the sunshine and warm temperatures, it may seem like a great time to take your dog for a run. But is it safe? The sweltering summer temperatures and humidity pose significant risks for the health and well-being of our furry friends. Heat exhaustion and stroke, sunburn, and asphalt and garden hose burns are all serious potential problems pet owners should know about before heading outdoors with their pets.

Heat Exhaustion or Stroke

Heat exhaustion and the more life-threatening heat stroke are significant summer hazards. Prevention is key as heat stroke can lead to permanent disability and is fatal in about 50 percent of cases.

Environmental factors that increase risk of heat exhaustion or stroke include:

- Water deprivation.
- Confinement in a poorly ventilated area such as a car.
- Lack of shade.
 - Lack of acclimation to the environment like relocation from the north to the south or from a dry to a humid climate.
- High humidity.
- Exercise or play in extremely high temperatures, especially after a meal or in animals not accustomed to exercise.
- Prolonged exposure to cage dryers or extended muzzling at the groomers or veterinary clinic.

Other factors that can increase the risk for developing heat exhaustion or stroke include:

- Obesity.
- Brachycephalic conformation.
 - “Short-faced” dogs like Pugs and Boston Terriers.
- Disease or conformation causing upper airway obstruction.
 - Tracheal collapse in Yorkshire Terriers or very narrow nostrils like in English Bull dogs.
 - Nasal tumors which can be common in cats.
- Cardiovascular or respiratory disease such as heartworm disease or asthma.
- Older animals.
- Certain neurological diseases such as intoxications.

Heat exhaustion is a very “sneaky” problem and can occur very quickly with little warning.

Many dogs are so loyal they will continue to follow a runner long after they should have stopped. And they may not be able to resist fetching that ball one more time, even if it's not healthy. It's up to caretakers to know when to stop.

Symptoms that may indicate your pet is suffering from heat exhaustion and/or stroke include:

- Excessive or exaggerated panting in dogs.
 - o Dogs don't sweat, so they have to rely completely on panting to dissipate heat.
 - o Cats do not pant – a panting cat is a medical emergency!
- Excessive drooling.
- Sluggishness.
- Weakness.
- Dark red or pale gums.
- Vomiting.
- Rapid heart rate.
- Staring or anxious facial expressions.
- Warm, dry skin.
- Collapse.

If you notice these symptoms, cooling your dog or cat immediately could be the difference between life and death. Use lukewarm water – NOT cold water or ice – to wet down your pet, and then immediately bring the animal to your veterinarian.

Heat exhaustion and stroke can be prevented by taking several precautions:

- Use caution during exercise, hunting, working, field trial participation, etc.
 - o Activity in the early morning or late evening is preferred.
 - o Avoid running on concrete or asphalt.
 - Dogs are closer than people to these surfaces and suffer the effects of heat that they radiate.
 - o Make sure animals are acclimated to exercise and heat.
 - Don't start an exercise program in the summer.
 - Have a physical exam performed on your pet before starting an exercise program.
- Always provide plenty of fresh, COOL water.
- Provide shade and adequate ventilation.
 - o Small enclosed areas like some dog houses may trap heat and increase the risk of heat exhaustion and stroke just like an enclosed car.
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- Never leave pets outdoors in the middle of the day unsupervised for extended periods

of time.

- Never leave pets on hot concrete or asphalt.
- Never leave pets in a hot car or in the back of a pickup truck parked in the sun.

Sunburns

Pets suffer from solar burns and skin cancer just like people do. White or lightly pigmented skin and sparsely haired areas like the nose, tips of ears and trunk can be highly susceptible to sunburn. Dogs or cats that are “belly-up” sunbathers are also susceptible to sunburn on the chest and abdomen.

Keys points to remember about sunburn include:

- Just like people, dogs and cats should avoid sun exposure between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m., and especially between 11 a.m.-2 p.m.
- Reflections from light-colored pavement and water can increase risk.
- Glass filters UV rays to a certain degree, so pets can sunbathe behind a closed window with less risk.
- Sun block with zinc oxide can be applied topically.
 - o WARNING: Animals that repeatedly lick this product off could develop zinc intoxication.
- Sun screens (with titanium dioxide) that are clear and waterproof are usually more desirable. Products should have an SPF of 30 or greater.
 - o Commercial sunscreen products and sunglasses for pets are available. Contact your veterinarian for suggestions.
- Apply sunscreen 15 to 30 minutes before sun exposure and reapply according to product directions.

Asphalt/Pavement Burns

Concrete and asphalt pavements, open beds of pickup trucks, sand beaches, etc. can cause severe burns to pets’ feet and skin. Asphalt temperatures can reach upwards of 160 degrees in summer.

Key points to remember about surface burns include:

- Pain may be the only sign that your pet has experienced burns to the feet.
- More severe signs may be blistering, peeling or sloughing of the pads.
 - o It may be a day or two after exposure before you see blistering or peeling of the paw pad.
- Immediate care should include immersing the feet in cool water.
 - o Ice baths or direct icing should be avoided!
- Avoid pavement, dirt and sand in direct sunlight in summer.

- o Grass is best surface in summer.
- o Use protective boots to protect feet if you have to walk your dog on pavement in summer.
- Do not leave dogs in open pickup truck beds in summer, even when moving.

If you think your dog or cat is suffering from these types of burns, see your veterinarian immediately!

Garden Hose Scalding Syndrome

Thinking about hosing down your dog to give him a “cool down” during the summer? Use caution! Severe thermal burns (scalds) can occur from garden hoses that have been lying in the sun.

Key points to remember about Garden Hose Scalding Syndrome:

- Temperatures above 90 degrees may cause water in garden hoses to reach high-enough temperatures to elicit a thermal scald injury.
- Scald injuries may not be apparent until several days or longer after the initial exposure.
 - o Letting your veterinarian know that this syndrome is a possibility will help with diagnosis.

Pool Safety

If these “dog days” of summer heat are going to include more time around the family pool, consider pool safety for your pet. It is estimated that thousands of pets die each year in drowning accidents! Tragedies of this nature can easily be avoided if precautions are taken.

Key points to remember about pool safety:

- Pets should NOT be allowed near a pool unsupervised.
- Don’t assume your dog knows how to swim.
 - o Not all dogs have the natural ability to swim.
 - o Some will paddle better than others, and some will just sink. Many inexperienced swimmers only paddle with their front legs. This can be exhausting, and dogs are more likely to tire and drown.
 - o Even experienced swimmers can panic if they accidentally fall in a pool.
- Dogs that are overweight or heavy with short legs (like Basset hounds and Dachshunds) have a greater challenge trying to swim.
- Older animals, those that suffer from a heart condition or those that have a seizure disorder should not be allowed unsupervised near a pool.
- Pets should be taught how to get out of the pool and where the steps are located.

o Small dogs may have a difficult time clearing steps designed for humans. A pet-safe pool ladder can be installed.

- Let your pet become familiar with water and the pool at a young age.
- Pool covers and solar pool blankets can appear as a solid surface to a pet. Pets can get trapped and become disoriented, making it difficult for them to find an exit out of the pool.
- Purchase a pool alarm system. These alarms can float in the pool and detect if there is a disturbance in the water.
- If you are taking your dog to the beach or lake, or enjoying a boat ride, put a life vest on your dog. Many styles and designs are commercially available.
- Pet CPR classes are available. Ask your veterinarian about training classes. Also, dog trainers can work with you and your dog on how to teach it to swim and on how to train it to exit the pool safely.

So enjoy those summer days with your best pal on four legs, but enjoy them with conscientious decisions regarding the weather. If you are hot and miserable in the heat of the day, your pet most likely is, too! Keep in mind that your pet is closer to the ground surface where temperatures are hotter. And if you can't stand on sand or the sidewalk without some flip flops, your pet can't either! Protect those feet from the heat!

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