



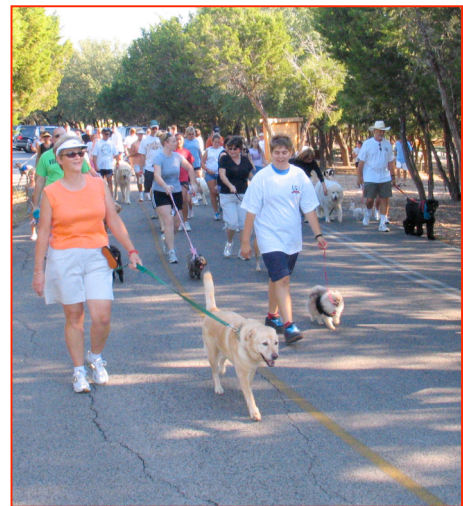
Summer Safety

10 Tips to Help Pets Beat the Summer Heat

In many parts of the country, sweltering summer temperatures routinely top 100 degrees. People and animals alike are stressed from the heat and it's important to make an extra effort to keep pets cool, comfortable, and healthy. Dogs get lots of media attention during the summer, but cats and other creatures (including humans!) are at risk too.

1. Keep your emergency information with you at all times. When an emergency situation happens, it's not the time to start frantically searching for your veterinarian's phone number, or the address of the nearest emergency clinic. Keep important numbers and medical information for your pet up to date and in your wallet or by the phone at all times.

2. Get to know your pet so that you can recognize an emergency. Learn to take your pet's pulse, count resting breaths and pants when exercising, and ask your veterinarian how to take your pet's temperature. Knowing what is normal for your pet will help you recognize an emergency soon enough to take action to minimize danger. Normal temperatures on cats and dogs are around 101 degrees. Anything over 103 is an emergency.



3. Never leave an animal in a parked car. Even when it's only 80 degrees outside, the inside of a car can heat up to more than 120 degrees in just minutes. And, leaving the windows partially rolled down won't do the trick. Even if you plan to be in the store for "just a minute," your pet is at risk of a heat stroke.

4. Keep animals out direct sunlight during the heat of the day, roughly 10 am to 6 pm. Dogs can only regulate their body temperature by panting and by a tiny amount of evaporation of sweat through the pads of their feet. When overheated, heatstroke can occur and lead to brain damage or death. Older, younger, overweight, and snub-nosed breeds such as bulldogs, pugs, shih tzus, etc. can have an especially difficult time with the heat. Also, long-haired breeds may need a summer trim to keep cool. Just remember not to shave the hair too close, creating a risk of sunburn and skin irritation. We humans can pull on a pair of shorts and a tank top, while our dogs or cats are still wearing a full set of furry "coveralls." A good rule of thumb is, if you're uncomfortable, your pet is uncomfortable.

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5. Know the signs of heat stroke. Symptoms of heat stroke in dogs include excessive panting, drooling, rapid pulse and fever. Immediately run cool (not ice cold) water over the animal and wrap with cool towels before transporting your pet to the veterinarian. Try offering your pet ice cubes to lick to begin to re-hydrate. Panting in cats is not normal, and if it lasts more than a few minutes, can be a sign of distress. See number 9, “kitty quirks” for more information on cats and heat stroke.

6. Prevent sunburn. Animals can get sunburned too, especially short-haired dogs, or dogs and cats with pink skin and white hair. Limit your pet’s exposure when the sun is unusually strong, and ask your veterinarian about an appropriate brand of sun block such as a non-irritating, zinc oxide, that can be applied to his or her ears and nose 30 minutes before going outside.

7. Always make sure animals have access to fresh water and shade. Try spraying down favorite shaded areas a few times during the day to create an outdoor “evaporative cooling system.” For outdoor dogs, try filling a kiddie pool with water and leaving it in the shade. Just be sure to change the water often to make sure you don’t inadvertently raise a new batch of mosquitoes.

8. Avoid strenuous exercise with your dog on extremely hot days, and do not exercise during the intense, mid-day heat. In hot climates, veterinarians recommend limiting activity to the early morning or late evening, about an hour after the sun has gone down. Be sure to bring along water, make frequent stops to allow your dog to rest and hydrate, and keep activity to 20 minutes or less. Remember that your dogs are eager to please and will keep going until you tell them to stop.

9. Test the heat radiating from the sidewalk or street for yourself. These hard surfaces absorb and hold heat. If it’s too hot for you to stand on in your bare feet, it will be too hot for the sensitive pads of your pet’s feet as well. And, while it’s never a good idea for a pet to ride in the back of an open pickup truck, the same principle applies. Place your hand against the bed of the pickup truck. If the metal surface is too hot for your hand, it’s too hot for your animals.

10. Understand kitty quirks. Cats exhibit many of the same symptoms as dogs when stressed by the heat. Early signs of heat stroke can be panting that lasts more than a few minutes, anxiety and pacing, increased heartbeat, respiratory distress or hyperventilation, lethargy, and an increased body temperature. And, oddly enough, cats affected by heat may actually drink less when they should be drinking more. Add ice cubes to their water bowl, or encourage kitty to drink by dabbing a little water at the corner of his or her mouth.

