



88 Beech Street, Essex Junction, VT 05452
(802) 878-6888 voice • (802) 878-2871 fax
www.vtvets.org • kathy@vtvets.org

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Kathy Finnie, Executive Director
802-878-6888
Kathy@vtvets.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 13, 2012

Top Summertime Tips for Pet Safety

Provided by the Vermont Veterinary Medical Association

Summertime! Finally, your chance to relax and unwind! With your sunblock, sunglasses and a good book, you plan to enjoy the day at the pool! Suddenly, you remember your dog is in the yard – unsupervised ...surely he will be okay for a couple hours. Or will he?

Summer temperatures might be great for tan lines and boating trips, but the excessive heat and increased outdoor activities could spell disaster for your pets. As the mercury rises, take just a few moments to insure that your pets are safe and prevent an urgent trip to the animal ER with a summertime emergency!

The most common heat related problem for pets is heat stroke. Also known as heat stress or hyperpyrexia, heat stroke is a real emergency for dogs. Even on moderately warm days, an excited dog might show a body temperature increase of 2-5 degrees Fahrenheit. Since dogs don't sweat like we do, they are unable to dissipate the excess heat and heat stroke may soon follow.

Any outdoor pet can overheat on a warm summer day, but short faced breeds, such as Pugs and Bulldogs, are at a higher risk. In addition, every year thousands of pets succumb to heat stroke because they were left in cars while their owners ran "just a few" errands.

Many cities and states have now made it a crime to leave your pet unattended in a vehicle. These are important laws as even on a 70 degree day, temperatures inside a car can soar to over 110 degrees in less than one hour!

Some owners try to help their pets by shaving the dog's long coat. Although this seems like a good idea, a well groomed and clean hair coat can actually insulate the dog from the heat and help keep them cooler.

Veterinarians will recommend shaving specific areas in long haired breeds. For example, shaving around the anus and groin can help keep the area clean and free from infections.

In some cases, shaving the hair coat could expose a lightly pigmented dog to potential sunburn. For short haired lightly colored breeds, Canine solar dermatitis is another problem. Boxers, Pit Bulls and Dalmatians are just a few examples of dogs that are at risk. In

these cases, chronic exposure to hot sunny days damages the skin and causes tender, red scaly lesions. Eventually, the skin becomes thickened and scarred.

When the sun goes down and the temperatures start to cool, your pets still face many summer challenges. The patriotic holidays during the summer months are often preceded by and celebrated with fireworks. The bright flashes and loud bangs are terrifying to some pets and can cause anxiety, stress and even escape.

Likewise, some pets react in a similar way to thunderstorms. Normally calm pets may become distressed, destructive and even bite in an attempt to get away from the noises. While running, they are at risk for being hit by a car, becoming lost or encountering another animal who might be aggressive.

The warm summer season also brings out a many pests that will actively seek out your pets. Fleas and ticks are two examples, but some species of biting flies are very fond of dogs' ears. Repeated bites can cause a condition that can be serious and difficult to control known as "fly strike".

It is possible to enjoy the summer with your pets by taking just a few precautions. First and foremost, always be aware of the weather forecast. Knowing the high temperature can help guide your plans for the day.

Don't leave your pet unattended outside or plan heavy exercise on hot, humid days. If your pet is left outdoors, he must have access to adequate shade and fresh water.

When it's time to run errands, leave your pet at home. Even a few minutes in a hot car is enough to increase your pet's body temperature dramatically.

If you find your pet disoriented, panting excessively or collapsed in the yard, move him immediately to a cooler environment. Use cool wet towels over his back, armpits and groin to help bring his temperature down. Fans are often helpful too. DO NOT USE ICE! Then, get him to your veterinarian immediately so that they can assess his status and begin life saving treatments.

Your veterinarian is also a good source of advice for products that will kill fleas and ticks. Some veterinarians also carry an insecticide gel that repel biting flies

If you are planning to take your pets to any outdoor celebrations or cook-outs, find out first if pets are welcome or if fireworks are planned. It might be easier to simply leave the dogs at home rather than risk a run-away or injury.

Most national parks allow pets, but rules vary by park and of course your pets must be on a leash at all times. Check ahead on the parks you plan to visit.

Summertime should be a time for relaxation and fun...don't let a pet emergency spoil your good time.

For information on veterinarians in your area, visit www.vtvets.org.