

## **Why Summer Is Dangerous for Pets**

Summer is a time we associate with great weather and outdoor fun. For our furry loved ones, though, summer can be dangerous and even deadly. Even on the hottest days, we typically can find relief, but our pets don't always have the same options available to them.

Heat is the threat that comes to mind foremost, but there are other things most are less likely to consider, such as fireworks, alcohol, and even the shape of an animal's face. Right now, you might be rolling your eyes a little at that, but hang in there; we're going to talk about risks and how to alleviate them so that you don't have to deal with a heartbreaking and unnecessary tragedy this summer. After all, we know how much you love your pets, and you might even place them a little above particular relatives who will go unmentioned!

### **Don't Leave Pets in Cars on Hot Days**

This is one of the biggest dangers of them all. Across most of the United States, summer daytime highs generally range from the 80s to well over 100 F. Now consider this: even with windows cracked open enough to allow ventilation but not allow an animal to escape, interior temperatures on an 85-degree day can reach over 100 degrees in as little as 10 minutes. In just half an hour, the interior temperature can exceed 120 degrees.

The internal body temperature of a dog is 101-102.5 degrees. Because dogs don't sweat, they have a harder time regulating their body temperatures than we do, and at over 105 degrees internally, they can get hyperthermia (body too hot) and start to crash fast, leading to permanent organ damage or death.

If you have to leave a pet inside a car on a hot day, leave the engine running, crank up the AC (and lock the doors), and make your stop as fast as you possibly can.

What can you do if you see an animal inside a car on a hot day and it appears to be in distress? (Signs are panting, drooling, and being unresponsive.) First, try to find the owner if you can, even if that means having a store manager page the person. If that doesn't work, call a local rescue group or animal control, or call the local ASPCA. In the worst of circumstances, you have the option of breaking a window and retrieving the animal. It might make you liable for damages, but you might save an animal's life, and the owner may even waive your liability out of gratitude.

### **Try Not To Walk Dogs or Leave Them Outside in Hot and Humid Weather**

During the hottest and most humid times of the day, pets tire faster and are more prone to suffer from heat exhaustion. Hot asphalt can also burn their paws, causing considerable pain. Heat also radiates off the pavement, and this can raise their body temperatures to dangerous levels. While you're sipping something cold from your insulated mug, your dog might be in distress.

Likewise, it's best not to leave them outside during those same times of the day. Dogs and cats alike are at risk of dehydration and at risk from burnt paws and radiated heat coming off metallic and asphalt surfaces. As all-American as the image is, don't leave your dog in the bed of a pickup while you're running errands in the middle of a summer day.

The best times to walk pets and let them outside are early and late in the day when temperatures are cooler and there is more shade.

### **If They Have To Be Outside, Make Sure They Have Shade and Water**

Sometimes there are good reasons you can't keep a pet inside all day. When that's the case, make sure of a few things:

- There will always be a place with shade.
- There is plenty of water, and the water is in a shaded location where it will not evaporate as quickly.
- If possible, have a neighbor come check in once or twice a day. Lots of responsible neighborhood kids are normally eager to do this at a very reasonable cost.

These outside tips apply not only to cats and dogs but to any animals kept outside such as horses, goats, and more.

### **Fireworks and Thunderstorms**

It's a deeply ingrained American tradition to set off fireworks on the Fourth of July to celebrate our nation's independence. However, many a pet or dog owner knows that pets often aren't as thrilled by the festivities as most people are. In fact, they often are terrified, and every year, some of those terrified pets do what instinct tells them to do: hide or run. Unfortunately, many that run end up lost and never come back, and many of them are struck and killed by cars.

You can go onto your local neighborhood forum and ask people to stop setting off fireworks, but that usually doesn't work. Instead, you can take some precautions:

- On a day like July 4 when you know people are going to use fireworks, make sure your pets are inside before it all starts up.
- Try distracting your pet with play, chew toys, and treats.
- If you have something like a media room or a basement, go in there with your pet, close the doors, and play a movie or music in hopes of drowning out the sounds of the fireworks.
- Having your pet microchipped increases the likelihood of finding it again if he or she does escape.

Thunderstorms also terrify a lot of pets, and the same advice holds true.

### **Buckle Up!**

Summer is a time of road trips for many people. More traffic means more accidents. If your pet is with you, it's a great idea to have a crate or carrier that you can secure with seatbelts or other restraints. This also helps prevent accidental escapes at stops. Too many people have had a pet go missing that way, and having to keep driving when the pet is somewhere behind is a choice no one has ever liked making.

### **People-friendly Is Not Always Dog-friendly**

If you have a dog, you know that it will eat or drink anything it can. In fact, more than one popular movie has featured dogs getting drunk and doing funny things.

In reality, alcohol is not good for dogs because they have no natural tolerance for it and it can harm them. Likewise, lots of people foods are anywhere from no good to unhealthy for pets.

So please make sure that when you have people over for that summer barbecue, the dog can't get into the food and no one pours a beer into the water bowl because it seemed like a funny idea at the time. Even if you don't end up with an injured dog, you might have a sick one; have fun cleaning up that mess.

### **Don't Shave a Dog or Cat During the Summer**

Trim if you must, but if you shave your pet's fur down close to the skin, you expose it to sunburn. On the other hand, if you brush a cat more frequently during hot months, you may help it avoid overheating (and may spare yourself some furballs to clean up).

### **Did You Recently Apply Insecticides, Herbicides or Rodenticides? Keep Pets Away.**

As we have said, dogs will eat almost anything. Cats love to eat (and regurgitate) grass. Pest-killers are poisons that can harm unintended targets as well. If you've recently treated your yard with chemicals, make sure you know how long it will be for pets (and people) to be in those areas safely again.

### **Be Careful with Pools**

Not all animals are good swimmers. Many dogs swim well, but many others do not. Cats can actually swim, but they tend to dislike being in water, and they can panic when that happens.

Don't leave pets unsupervised around pools when there is not an effective barrier keeping them away.

## **Ensure That Windows Are Screened**

On some days, conditions may be perfect for keeping windows open. Just make sure they have screens. Pets fall out of unscreened windows more often than you might think.

## **Flat-faced Furry Friends Have It Tougher**

Many animals, including cats and dogs, lose heat by panting. Pugs and Persian cats, though, have flatter faces that keep them from panting as well as other breeds do. This increases heat-related risks to them, and it's important to make sure you consider those risks and plan for them.

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Summer is a fun time, and it can be safe and fun for your pets as well. We hope this post and the advice it contains will help you and your pets enjoy many great summers to come!

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### SOURCES USED:

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