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Hot Weather Hazards / Tips

While summertime is often a time to relax, play sports, enjoy picnics, trips to the beach, and backyard parties, the summer months can also offer some potential hazards to our companion animals.

Heatstroke, Heat Exhaustion, Heat Related Concerns

Parked Cars

Leaving your dog in a parked car in the summer (even with the window left a few inches open), can cause heatstroke within minutes.

Note: Leaving your dog in a car parked in the shade does not assure that your dog will not become seriously overheated. Shaded cars may still get very hot due to the greenhouse effect, and the sun may also move enough to change shaded areas into sunny ones.

Even with the windows wide open, a parked car, truck or van can quickly become a furnace. An 85-degree car can heat up to a deadly 122 in 10 minutes, and, it is very easy to lose track of time when busy running errands.

***Dogs left in parked cars also risk being harassed or stolen.

***When traveling, carry a gallon container in a cooler filled with fresh, cold water to provide fresh, clean water to your pet.

Animal Travel

To help prevent your dog or cat from overheating when traveling by airplane, avoid transporting your companion animal in the cargo section of the plane during hot weather. (Always take into consideration both the departure and arrival temperatures). If you must transport your dog or cat in the cargo section, take a direct, early morning or late evening flight whenever possible, as layovers, delayed take-offs, and mid-day travel (when the temperature is hottest) can all pose an increased risk.

Exercise

Heat exhaustion is often caused by over-exercising or running with a dog during hot weather. Both heatstroke and heat exhaustion can result in brain damage, heart failure or even death and any breed may be at risk. Always bring cool water along when walking, running or hiking with your dog during hot weather. To cool off an overheated dog, offer him plenty of water, then wet the dog's body and paws with lukewarm water, then fan off to help evaporate the

water. A dog's normal internal body temperature is between 100.5 F° and 102 F°. If the dog experiences heatstroke or heat exhaustion, he should receive veterinary attention as soon as possible.

Note: Don't force your animal to exercise after a meal in hot, humid weather. Always exercise him in the early morning or in the evening. In extremely hot weather, don't leave your dog standing on the street, and keep walks to a minimum. He is much closer than you are to the hot asphalt or pavement and his body can heat up quickly. His paws can burn since shoes do not protect them.

Sunburn

Pets are susceptible to sunburns, too, particularly short-haired animals. Pink or light-colored noses are also sensitive and easily burned. A clean coat can help prevent summer skin problems; keep your animal well groomed. Shaving heavy-coated dog hair to a 1-inch length helps prevent overheating. Don't shave the hair down to the skin; this robs the dog of protection from the sun. A cat should be brushed often for a tangle-free coat.

Shade

Always provide plenty of shade for an animal staying outside. A properly constructed doghouse serves best. During extreme heat waves, consider bringing your dog inside during the hottest time of the day and let your pet rest in a cool part of the house. Provide plenty of cool, fresh water at all times. It is advisable to keep cats indoors at all times.

Indoor Pets

Indoor pets should be kept in well-ventilated rooms with good air circulation. Be sensitive to old and overweight animals in hot weather. Brachycephalic (snub-nosed) dogs (examples: Bulldogs, Pekinese, Boston Terriers, Lhasa Apso and Shih Tzu) and those with heart or lung diseases should be kept in air-conditioned rooms as much as possible.

The Beach

Never take an animal to the beach unless you can provide a shaded spot and plenty of fresh water for your pet to drink. Remember, streets, sidewalks and sand get hot very quickly, and your pet's feet are very sensitive. Visiting the ocean? Then, rinse your pet off after they have been in salt water. Remember, be a good neighbor and pick up after your pet at the beach ☺

Other Hazards

Swimming Pools

Each year, puppies, dogs and small children accidentally drown in backyard swimming pools when left unattended. To help prevent such a tragedy, do not allow unsupervised use of these areas, always keep fenced-in pools locked securely when not being used, and keep companion animals and small children away from unenclosed and unoccupied pools. Not all dogs can swim and an animal can drown if it falls in the water.

Picnics

Put the picnic garbage away so the dog won't get into it. Corncobs, chicken, and bones are common foreign bodies that are found in dogs' stomachs and intestines during the cook-out

season. These can be life-threatening and expensive to remove. Popsicle sticks are also a commonly swallowed object that may need immediate veterinary intervention.

Vaccinations

Be sure that your pet's vaccinations are up-to-date. It is particularly important that dogs be vaccinated against:

Parvovirus – an illness that flourishes in hot weather. It can be fatal to young dogs that have not received a series of vaccinations to be fully protected.

Rabies virus – during the summer month's pets may spend a lot of time outdoors and the chances of encounters with wildlife (possible rabies carriers) increase.

Distemper complex – discuss these health concerns and annual vaccination recommendations with your veterinarian.

Leptospirosis- This bacterial disease is spread by wild animals through water. It is also contagious to people and can cause kidney and liver failure.

Leashes/Collars

Leashes for dogs are a great preventer of injuries and in many cases, are lifesaving. Leash your pet when you are out walking. They can't dash into traffic, run after another dog, or chase squirrels or other wildlife.

Never tie an animal outside on a correction or choke collar. The pet can choke to death. If you must tether your pet, use a buckle collar with ID tags instead (in all seasons). If you must tie your pet outside for brief periods, be sure to check his collar and leash often for wear and tear. Many pets have been lost, injured or killed because their collar snapped or their leash frayed and broke; if your pet gets loose, they may wander off and get lost, or even worse, get hit by a car. Don't let this happen to your pet.

Car Windows

Prevent your dog from hanging his head out of a moving car or truck window when taking him for a ride. Bugs, small pebbles and other debris can injure his eyes, and he is also at risk of jumping out of the vehicle. Closing automatic car windows while your dog is hanging his head out of the car window can cause him or her serious harm.

Pickup Trucks

Never allow your dog to ride in the back of an open pickup truck, unless he is safely secured by a padded harness to the center of the pickup "bed" with specially designed tethers. A loose dog in a bed of a truck has no protection in the event of an accident or they decide to jump out.

Anti-Freeze

If ingested, anti-freeze (ethylene glycol), the bright green colored fluid frequently seen near curbs, is often lethal – even in very small quantities. Be alert for coolant leaking from your vehicle. Because many dogs and cats like its sweet taste, there are an enormous number of animal fatalities each year from animals drinking anti-freeze. Poisoning from anti-freeze is considered a serious medical emergency which must be treated by a qualified veterinarian IMMEDIATELY.

Try animal-friendly products that use propylene glycol rather than those containing ethylene glycol. Fortunately, the Sierra Company now offers a far less toxic form of anti-freeze. They can be reached at (888) 88-SIERRA.

Chemicals/Insecticides

Avoid walking your dog in areas that you suspect have been sprayed with insecticides or other chemicals, as poisonings increase during the summer when gardens, lawns, and trees are sprayed. These chemicals can sicken or kill an animal. Call your veterinarian or the ASPCA National Animal Poison Control Center (ASPCA/NAPCC) if you suspect that your animal has been poisoned.

Keep your pet well groomed, daily brushing or combing gives the owner a chance to check for ticks and other parasites, particularly fleas. Fleas can cause allergic reactions and “hot spots” in dogs (one or more big wet lesions that appear suddenly in areas that the animal scratched). See your veterinarian for flea and tick preventives and if a “hot spot” appears. Cats can be more sensitive to and have severe, sometimes fatal reactions to some flea products; even those specifically labeled for cats. Take your companion animal to the veterinarian for a spring or early summer checkup and have the doctor recommend a safe, effective fleas and tick control program. Just because it’s for sale at a store does not mean it is without danger for your pet.

Heartworm Disease

Heartworm is transmitted by mosquitoes and it can be prevented by administering a monthly preventive, (in Michigan, medication is usually administered year-round). Even if your dog and cat are on year-round preventative medication, they need to have an annual heartworm test at your veterinarian and get their preventative prescription renewed. Cats can, and do get heartworm disease, though it doesn’t present in the same way as in dogs. With cats the most common sign of infection is sudden death, and there is no treatment once they are infected. Prevention is more effective, and a much cheaper alternative than infection ☺

Other Tips

Spaying and Neutering Benefits

Regardless of the time of year, having your dog or cat neutered will help reduce the likelihood of a number of concerns, such as: your dog or cat roaming and getting injured as with fights and hit-by-cars or becoming lost or stolen, having unwanted puppies and kittens, fighting, sexual frustration and mounting, urinary marking, dominance aggression, and a variety of physical conditions including certain types of cancer.

As with most other diseases, prevention (neutering) is much easier, less expensive, and provides lifelong benefits to the animal as opposed to not doing this surgery.