

SUMMER SAFETY
by Maureen Ross, MA – July-08

Heat Exhaustion

Along with lots of sunshine (Vitamin D), the hot weather can make anyone feel uncomfortable, especially your dog. A dog's body handles heat differently we do. They cool down by panting. Dark and double-coated breeds, who may love to hike, can become overheated very quickly. Dogs left in vehicles can overheat, causing brain damage and/or death.

We enjoy having our dogs join us for rides, but be mindful that you could be risking the dog's life if left unattended on a hot day even with the windows down. On an 85-degree day, for example, the temperature inside your car, with the windows slightly opened *will reach 102 degrees in 10 minutes!* In 30 minutes, it will go up to 120 degrees. On warmer days, it will go even higher.

A dog's normal body temp is 101.5 to 102.2 degrees Fahrenheit. A dog can withstand a body temp of 107-108 degrees Fahrenheit for only a very short time before suffering irreparable brain damage or death. The closed car interferes with the dog's normal cooling process, *evaporation through panting.*

If you must leave your dog in the car for short periods, leave the car windows ajar, so your dog can get fresh air. If you leave them too wide open, you risk your dog jumping out, getting stuck or being stolen. Park in the shade and cover your front windows with a shade cover. Get a little fan that plugs into your cigarette lighter, secure it so the dog can't knock it over or get hurt. Leave some water in a spill-proof bowl with ice.

IF YOUR DOG IS OVERCOME BY HEAT EXHAUSTION, YOU CAN GIVE IMMEDIATE FIRST AID BY IMMERSING HIM OR HER IN COLD WATER UNTIL THE BODY TEMP IS LOWERED. IF YOUR DOG DOES NOT RECOVER IMMEDIATELY ... GET TO THE NEAREST VETERARIAN.

On hikes: Have plenty of water (start with frozen) and Benadryl available. See below, it's self-explanatory. Dogs can tolerate a spray sunscreen like Neutrogenia Fresh Cooling Body Mist with Sun block 45, and protect them from ticks with a good top-spot preventative.



SUMMER SAFETY CONCERNS

Summer is truly a fun time to take pleasure in your canine companion. With precautions, you can hike, take walks and attend summer functions. Here are some safety tips for responsible dog guardians.

- | Never leave your dog unattended in direct sunlight. Heatstroke can occur and lead to brain damage and possibly death (see Heat Exhaustion).
- | Signs of Heatstroke: panting, drooling, rapid pulse and fever. Immediately immerse the dog in cool water and seek veterinary assistance.
- | Always make sure your dog has access to cold water and shade, especially if you are leaving them outdoors in the peak heat times.
- | All dogs should have proper identification, with a collar, ID tag and microchip or tattoo. If you are camping or hiking in a strange, unfenced area, keep your dog on a flexi-lead or leash. This will prevent accidents and injuries to yourself, your dog and others.
- | Avoid strenuous exercise, especially if your dog is out-of-condition. Stretch and warm up before hikes. Refrain from physical activity when the sun's heat is intense. Swimming is fine, but they can still overheat. Don't force or throw puppies into water. Gently coax them in ... most learn how to swim naturally.
- | Shorthaired dogs can sunburn and heavy coated, black dogs will overheat quicker.
- | Too much seawater will make a dog sick!

HEALTH TIPS

We may know our canine companions better than anyone, but it is important to remember that if you are not a medical professional, keep some of the following in mind:

- | Discuss vaccination protocols with your Veterinarian. Diseases such as rabies, distemper, parvo and lyme are ever-present dangers.
- | Beware of insect bites. If your dog is bitten or stung, remove the stinger and watch for allergic reactions or anaphylactic shock. If there have been multiple stings, go to a Vet. We administer appropriate dog doses of Benadryl. Have some with you. If you aren't sure about dosing ... children's liquid or pill is usually fine for dogs under 50lbs and over 50lbs we give a adult dose.
- | Check your dog daily for fleas and ticks. Brush them regularly and check the brush.
- | Heartworm is a common problem for dogs (and sometimes cats). Have a heartworm check yearly. Most Vets are using 3-way tests for heartworm & lyme.
- | Make sure lawn and garden products are dog friendly. Keep plants and fertilizers out of the dog's reach.
- | Being outdoors means being exposed to the elements. Dogs need extra-care with brushing and bathing.
- | No matter how careful you are, accidents can happen. Keep your Vet's and Emergency phone numbers nearby and in your wallet.

ENJOY A SAFE AND JOYFUL SUMMER WITH YOUR CANINE FRIEND