

# Summer Hazards and Your Dog

- When temperatures outside reach dangerous levels, the temperature inside the house can, too. Keep fresh water available, and make sure your dog has a cool place to spend the day.
- Bring your dog indoors if a heat advisory is issued, or if severe weather (heavy rain, high winds, flooding) is expected.
- Never leave your dog in a car when the weather is warm, and try to avoid walking or other exercise during the heat of the day.
- Keep vaccines up-to-date, and continue parasite control throughout the summer.
- Regardless of whether your dog spends time outdoors, exposure to dangerously high temperatures, environmental hazards, and physical dangers is possible. Knowing what to look for is the first step toward protecting your dog from potential summer hazards.

### What Should I Know About Warmer Temperatures and Heatstroke?

Dogs that spend most of their summer days inside are protected from many warm weather hazards, but only if the temperature inside the home remains within a healthy range. In an effort to reduce energy usage and costs, some pet owners shut off fans and air conditioning when they leave the house in the morning and turn them on when they return later in the day. However, when temperatures outside reach dangerous levels, temperatures inside the house can, too. Being shut inside a hot house can be deadly for your dog. Dogs can't sweat; they rely heavily on panting to cool themselves off. When the temperature in the environment increases, panting becomes less effective. This means that your dog could be locked inside with minimal options for cooling down.

Instead of turning off the air conditioner, try leaving it on a conservative but comfortable setting (perhaps 76°F) while you are out. Make sure your dog has plenty of fresh water and consider closing curtains to reduce the heating effects of sunlight

through the windows. If there are parts of the house that are likely to be cooler, make sure your dog has access to those areas.

Dogs that go outside need even more protection from hot weather. Access to clean drinking water is essential, as well as having cool, shaded areas available if your dog wants to get out of the sun. Remember, however, that fleas also tend to like cool, shaded, moist areas, so be sure to use a safe and effective flea control product on your dog. Dogs should not be left outside for long periods of time in the summer and should always have the option of coming inside. It's important to be aware of the risk of heatstroke so you can keep your pet safe and healthy.

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Sadly, heatstroke is a significant problem for dogs. Heatstroke occurs when the dog's body temperature exceeds a healthy range, and it can be fatal. Heatstroke commonly occurs when dogs are locked inside a car. Just a few minutes in a car on a hot day (even with the windows cracked) can be deadly for a dog. Research has shown that on a partly cloudy 93°F day, a car can heat up to 120°F in just 15 minutes. Even cooler days can be deadly. A similar test conducted on a 71°F day determined that the temperature inside a car parked in the sun with the windows cracked open went up to 116°F in 1 hour. Never leave your dog in a car when the weather is warm.

Heatstroke can also occur when dogs exercise in hot weather. When possible, try to avoid walking your dog during the heat of the day, and consider making walks shorter. Strenuous exercise should be

skipped, or at least postponed until the cooler part of the day. If you must exercise with your dog, carry cool water and take frequent breaks.

Even dogs that are used to being outside can suffer during hot weather. Remember that young, elderly, or sick dogs are more likely to become dehydrated or otherwise ill as a result of heat exposure. If a severe heat advisory is issued in your area and humans are advised to stay indoors, it is a good idea to bring your dog indoors, too. If your dog cannot be brought indoors, a ventilated or air-conditioned garage or mud room can provide enough shelter in some cases. Dogs should also be brought inside if severe weather is expected, as heavy rain, flooding, and high winds can be deadly for pets trapped outside.

### **What Should I Know About Exercising With My Dog?**

Many people take advantage of warm summer weather to increase exercise with their dogs. In many cases, this is a great idea. However, unless your dog has exercised regularly during the rest of the year, his or her body needs time to adjust to a more active lifestyle. Before embarking on an exercise program with your dog, schedule an examination with your veterinarian. This can help identify any medical problems that may make it difficult or dangerous for your dog's activity level to increase. Your veterinarian may also be able to recommend which exercises are best for your pet. For example, not every dog needs to run or swim in order to be healthy. (In fact, swimming does not come naturally for every dog; if you take your dog in a boat with you, make sure your pet has a life preserver.) Even if you are just planning leash walks, your veterinarian can advise you how to gradually increase the level of these workouts in a way that is safe and healthy for your dog.

### **What Should I Know About Seasonal Allergies?**

Depending on where you live, warm weather can bring a variety of pollens and other allergens into your dog's environment that are absent during the winter months. Dogs with seasonal allergies tend to become itchy (unlike humans, who develop runny eyes and sneezing).

Itching can make your dog miserable. Sometimes the itching can become so severe that a dog can develop skin wounds, skin infections, and severe hair loss. If you think your dog may have a seasonal allergy, schedule a visit with your veterinarian. Medication can frequently help, and your veterinarian may recommend allergy testing to determine what your dog may be allergic to.

### **Why Are Strange Animals Hazardous?**

Dogs that spend time outside are more likely to have encounters with stray cats and wild animals during the summer months. Such encounters increase the risk of bite wounds, scratches, and other injuries related to fighting. Infectious diseases such as rabies can also be transmitted through bite wounds.

If possible, leash walk your dog. If your dog must spend time outdoors unattended, make sure his or her vaccines are up-to-date.

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### **What Toxic Chemicals Might My Pet Be Exposed To?**

Lawn chemicals and fertilizers, insect repellants and sprays, weed control products, antifreeze, slug bait, ant bait, rat poison, and pool chemicals are just a few toxic chemicals your dog may encounter in your home or on your property. Learn more about dangerous chemicals at the ASPCA (American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) Animal Poison Control Center: <http://www.aspc.org/pet-care/poison-control/>.

### **How Can I Prevent Bee Stings and Related Hazards?**

Bee stings, spider bites, and other related injuries are common in dogs. Check around your home (inside and out) for beehives, wasp nests, and other hazards your family and pets may encounter. Don't forget to also check garages and storage sheds.

### **How Can I Prevent Fleas, Ticks, and Other Parasites?**

Fleas, ticks, and intestinal parasites (like roundworms and hookworms) are year-round hazards for your dog. However, increased exposure to the outdoors and certain parasite life stages during the warmer months makes these predators more of a concern during the summer. Be sure to keep your dog up-to-date on fecal parasite testing, and make sure you continue flea, tick, and parasite prevention during the summer months. If your dog receives heartworm preventive medication, continue this during the summer (heartworm disease is carried by mosquitoes, which are mostly active from the spring through the

fall). Ask your veterinarian about the best ways to protect your dog from fleas, ticks, heartworms, and intestinal parasites.

### **What Should I Know About Toxic Plants?**

Your dog may encounter toxic houseplants (such as elephant ear and dieffenbachia) at any time of the year, but plants that flower in warm weather, like daisies, dahlias, and chrysanthemums, are also toxic and create additional hazards for dogs that spend time outside. Information about poisonous houseplants and outdoor plants and flowers is available at the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center: <http://www.asPCA.org/pet-care/poison-control/>.