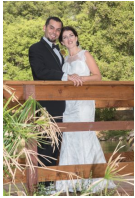




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Keeping Your Pets Safe In Hot Weather



Photo by Angela McLaughlin

By Angela McLaughlin - Ramona Home Journal • Thu, Jul 13, 2017

With Ramona's recent heat wave just a glimpse of what summer may bring, it is important to keep hot-weather safety precautions in mind to keep everyone protected — including family pets.

Many of us want to involve our canine friends in our daily activities, but there are a few things to be aware of during the summer months.

Provide the Things They Need

It may seem obvious, but clean, fresh water and shade are vital to the health of your pet — and they are even more essential during hot weather.

Dr. Amanda Perry, associate veterinarian at VCA Adobe Animal Hospital in

Ramona, states that circulating air is also an important thing to consider, as it allows your pet to cool itself more efficiently.

"Anything over 80 degrees, make sure your pet has shade, good air circulation and water," she says.

Keep Them Out of the Heat

Exercising your pet in the morning and evening when the weather is cooler is best.

"Ideally, they shouldn't be in the sun between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., when the sun is the strongest," Perry says.

When outside with your pet, pay attention to where you are walking, as the asphalt can heat up quickly.

"People want to go hiking with their dogs in the middle of the day," she says. "Mount Woodson is right there — it is beautiful and is great exercise, but you start walking on that pavement, and we have pets coming in with second- and third-degree burns on the bottoms of their feet."

A good rule is to check the ground temperature with the back of your hand — if it is too warm for you, it is too warm for the pads of their feet. Keep them on grass or cool surfaces whenever possible, or purchase lightweight dog booties for additional protection.

Avoid locking your pet in a vehicle unattended. The best way to circumvent this is to plan your day in advance so you are sure that your stops will be pet-friendly. Even in moderate weather, an enclosed vehicle can heat up quickly.

The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) states that even if the outside temperature is only 70 degrees, the inside of a car may be as much as 20 degrees hotter — and on an 85-degree day, it takes only 10 minutes for the inside of a vehicle to reach 102 degrees.

"It is safe to say that leaving an animal in a poorly ventilated/cooled vehicle on a warm-to-hot day is one of the quickest and most common ways for heat exhaustion to happen in our pets," says Dr. Michael Lund, a veterinarian at the ASPCA.

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"Because the act of perspiration in cats and dogs is close to non-existent — both species have sweat glands on their paw pads — any significant rise in core body temperature can be more difficult to lower in hot conditions."

As a dog begins to overheat, it will show symptoms of heat exhaustion, such as excessive panting, increased heart and respiratory rate, and drooling, among other things.

A dog's normal temperature ranges from 100 to 102.5 degrees, Perry says. As the body temperature rises to dangerous levels, symptoms may increase in severity to include vomiting, diarrhea, unresponsiveness and seizures.

"If a dog is playing hard but has water and shade, they can recover in about five minutes," she says. "If they are panting hard and they're not recovering quickly, that's a bad sign."

Seek immediate medical attention if your dog is showing signs of heat exhaustion.

Certain dogs are at a higher risk, such as those with long or thick coats, flat faces, heart or lung issues, and elderly or overweight dogs.

What to Do if They Get Too Hot

What if you aren't near a vet and you have a dog that is overheating?

The first step is to remove the dog from the hot environment and bring it somewhere with a cooler temperature and more air circulation.

Perry recommends directing a fan at your pets to aid in the cooling process.

"The fan is really important. As they breathe, they are exchanging temperature by panting."

If you believe your dog is only slightly overheated, Lund says you may allow it to cool naturally, offering water with or without ice cubes and a place out of the heat.

For moderate to severe episodes of heat exhaustion, he suggests more immediate attempts to cool down your pet, including providing a cool place to lie down, such as a tile or concrete floor; placing cool water on the skin around the head, paws, armpits, stomach and back with a damp towel; and then positioning a fan near the pet to continue the cooling process.

It is possible to cool an animal too quickly, so owners should refrain from using ice packs and allow their pet to decrease its internal temperature slowly, until it appears more comfortable.

Rebecca Goerisch, hospital manager at VCA Adobe Animal Hospital, advises bringing your pet to a veterinarian as soon as possible if the situation appears urgent. For emergencies outside normal business hours, she recommends contacting the Pet Emergency & Specialty Center in La Mesa or Animal Specialty Group in Kearny Mesa, as both clinics are open 24 hours.

"It is a very serious and life-threatening condition that can ultimately result in death and/or have lasting detrimental effects if not treated appropriately and quickly," Lund adds.

Keep Them Entertained Safely

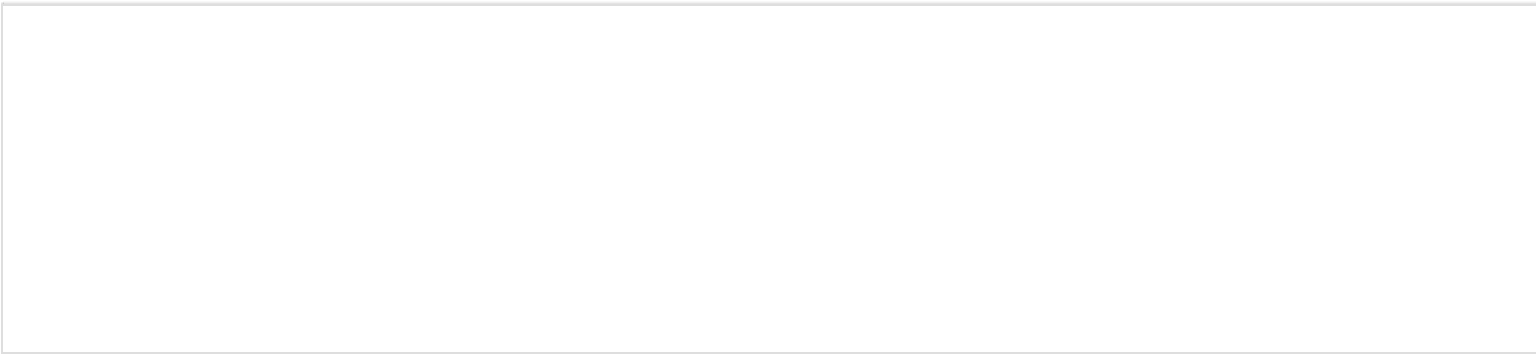
Keeping your dog indoors on hot days is the best way to protect it from the heat — but it can get boring. There are a few things you can do to make your pet's life more interesting, including playing mentally stimulating games, introducing a treat-dispensing toy or making frozen treats, such as a mix of xylitol-free peanut butter and water in an ice tray, and adding bananas and blueberries for extra flavor and texture.

"Providing outlets for animals to exercise their brains is an excellent way to tire them out, and in some cases, is more exhausting than physical exercise would be," says Alison Schramel, animal behavior and training supervisor at the Animal Humane Society. "You've experienced this if you've ever been completely drained after a day at work or a conference, even though you've been sedentary all day."

The summer season is a time of fun and adventure for our furry friends, but it's also essential to keep them healthy, happy and safe from warm-weather dangers.

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