

# FOCUS

O N P E T H E A L T H

## PROTECT YOUR PET DURING THE SUMMER

Everyone enjoys frolicking with their furry friends in the warm summer air. But as fun as the warmer weather can be, the summer season poses a unique set of dangers and challenges to your pets that you may not be aware of. Here are a few things to watch out for when you're lapping up the sunlight with your purr-fect pal.

### Top 5 Summer Risks

#### 1. Heatstroke

Heatstroke develops rapidly and can be brought on by exposure to high temperatures, humidity and poor ventilation. Signs include panting, staring, decreased responsiveness, dehydration and rapid heart rate and can result in brain damage, seizures and suffocation. Older pets, those with respiratory or heart problems, overweight pets and those with a history of previous heat stress are especially susceptible. Lack of shade and ventilation, too much exercise, and not enough fresh water are risk factors. Temperatures in a closed car when the outside temperature is 78 degrees can reach 90 degrees in five minutes and 110 degrees in 25 minutes. On a hot summer day the inside car temperatures can rapidly reach 150 degrees.

#### 2. Sun

Pets, just like people, are susceptible to sun damage. Especially those with thin hair or bald areas and those that have recently had a short hair cut, which is popular during the summer months. These pets can suffer severe sunburn and skin damage unless they are protected by shade or clothing. Sunscreen for people works for pets and there are special preparations made for dogs.

#### 3. Travel

Vacations and family outings are popular in the summer and can be fun for

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both pets and their people. Travel can also be stressful. Before taking a long trip with your pet take several short trips to help your pet get used to the car and the motion. Pets frequently get motion sickness and it can often be prevented or lessened by short repeated trips. Remember not to leave your pet in a closed car. If you need to leave the vehicle take your pet with you or leave the windows partially down and park in the shade. Pets left at home or in a boarding kennel may suffer from separation anxiety. Consider a pet sitter or take your pet's favorite bed or toys to the kennel.

#### 4. Fireworks and thunderstorms

Summer means fireworks in areas where they are legal. Noise from thunder and fireworks can be very frightening for many pets even while indoors at their own home. Try closing all windows and doors to cancel out as much noise as possible. For those who have been stressed in the past, your veterinarian may suggest anti-anxiety medication or tranquilizers. When pets are outdoors and near fireworks keep them on a leash at all times. Pets don't know the danger of exploding fireworks and may try to retrieve a live firecracker or rocket with serious consequences.

#### 5. Injury

Summer means more walks, trips to the park and outdoor activities of all kinds. Pets are eager to join in the fun and like young children they can be easily consumed by the activities and not pay attention to what's happening around them sometimes ending in some degree of trauma. Pets, like people, also need to gradually increase their amount of exercises to allow their metabolism and endurance to increase at a comfortable pace.

#### Closing Thoughts

We all love our pets and do our best to keep a vigilant eye out for things that might hurt them. Making sure to watch for summer-specific threats ensures that they can have a fun and safe summer this year and for years to come.

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