

Hot Weather Can be Deadly for Animals

With the continuing hot weather across the Commonwealth, health alerts have been issued advising people to protect themselves in many ways, including drinking plenty of water, wearing light-colored and lightweight clothing, and remaining in the shade.

At the same time, we must remember to protect our pets from the same heat that affects us, since they don't have natural ways to keep cool. While people can sweat profusely to regulate body temperature, most animals are not able to do this. For example, dogs pant heavily to release heat through their tongues. And while people can have choices as to how to deal with the heat, the animals don't have these choices.

A few hot weather life-saving tips for pets:

- Never leave your pet unattended in a parked vehicle for any period of time. On a warm day, the temperature in a parked car can reach 120°F in a matter of minutes - even with the windows partially open. Your pet can quickly suffer permanent brain damage or die from heatstroke or suffocation when trapped in such a high temperature, even for a short time.
- If you see an unattended animal confined in a vehicle, notify the local animal control agency or police department immediately!
- Leaving a pet in a vehicle not only exposes him to the dangers of heat stress, it also expose him to pet theft. Thousands of pets are stolen each year from unattended vehicles. Leave your pet at home while you visit, shop, or do errands when the weather is hot.
- Taking your pet for a ride may seem like fun, but many pets prefer to spend their time in the comfort and safety of your home. Explore activities that you and your pet can share at home. Walks in the early morning or evening near sunset are best to keep both you and your dog from overheating.
- If you are a jogger and like to take your dog jogging, remember that he has no choice as to how fast or how far you run. Keep his well-being in mind while you exercise.
- If you must take your pet with you in your car, do so safely. Cats should ride in pet carriers, and dogs should ride in travel crates or be on a leash. Transporting an animal in the open bed of a pick-up truck or with its head-protruding out a window invites disaster.
- Animals that are left outside must be given shelter from the sun and wind, and must be provided with plenty of fresh, clean, cool water as well as healthy food. Consider bringing them into a cool house when the heat outside is excessive.

Following these health tips will help both you and your pet get through the "dog days of summer" happy and healthy. If you have any questions about your pet's health or it's care, call your veterinarian or local humane society or animal shelter immediately.