

Hot Weather Tips for Pets

A visit to the veterinarian for a summer checkup for pets is a must to check for heartworm (cats can get heartworm, too) and to ask for a safe flea and tick control program. Cats and dogs need different products. If your pet isn't micro-chipped, now is the time. Pets can be escape artists, especially in summer with more people coming and going.

Both cats and dogs need to be registered in Hays and wear their tags. The collar should be loose enough to slip two fingers between the collar and neck. Cats should have a breakaway collar.

If your pet isn't spayed or neutered, get 'er done. You will have a happier, healthier pet who is less apt to roam. And you will prevent pet overpopulation.

Never leave your pets in a car "just for a few minutes," even parked in the shade with the windows cracked. In less than 10 minutes, the car temperature can rise 40 degrees, and pets are susceptible to heatstroke at any temperature over 110 degrees. If you see a pet left in a car, call Animal Control at 625-1011.

Dogs love to ride in the backs of pickups. Resist the sad eyes and begging. Any sudden start, stop or turn may toss your dog into the street. Hays Animal Control regularly picks dogs up on Vine that have been tossed out of a truck and hit by traffic, sometimes a couple in a week. Don't leash your dog inside the truck bed. Many dogs have been strangled when tossed or bumped over the side of the truck and left helplessly dangling.

Open truck beds provide no protection from the sun. The sun can heat the metal floor of a truck bed enough to burn a pet's paw pads.

Keep head and paws inside the car. Although dogs love to stick their heads out open windows, wind can seriously irritate mucous membranes and blow pieces of grit into their eyes. As gross as it sounds, insects can lodge in the nasal passages or get sucked into the windpipe.

Keep your cat indoors. Other cats fighting for love or territory can cause a great deal of damage to your cat. Car accidents are always a threat.

Provide fresh water and plenty of shade for outdoor animals. Bring your dog or cat inside during the heat of the day. Water bowls should be washed with soap and water and rinsed thoroughly. Some blue green algae are toxic to pets.

Playtime is best early in the morning or in the evening, but not after a meal or when the weather is humid. Hot pavement or sidewalk can burn paw pads.

Be especially sensitive to older and overweight animals in hot weather. Snub-nosed dogs such as bulldogs, pugs and shih tzus, as well as those with lung or heart disease, should be kept cool in air-conditioning as much as possible.

Steer clear of areas that you suspect have been sprayed with insecticides or other chemicals when walking your dog.

Please be alert for coolant or other automotive fluid leaking from a car. Both cats and dogs are attracted to the sweet taste, which can be fatal.

People food at barbecues and picnics can give pets a whale of an upset stomach. Keep matches, lighter fluid, citronella candles and insect coils out of reach of pets.

Poisonous items that people may not think of: insecticides that are not cat or dog specific, mouse and rat poisons, herbicides, cocoa mulch, chocolate, grapes and raisins, avocados, fertilizers, paint, solvents, glue, xylitol in sugarless gum and candy, sunscreens that are not specific for pets, any part of a lily plant, yews and compost piles.

Groom your pets regularly to prevent skin rashes. Long-haired cats may need a lion cut, but never completely shave either a cat or dog to the skin. They sunburn, too.

Make sure the windows and door screens of your home are snug and sturdy.

Do not leave pets unsupervised around a swimming pool area. Try not to let your cat or dog drink pool water. Chlorine and other chemicals can cause an upset stomach.

In a boat, make sure your pet is wearing a flotation device.

DEET can lead to neurological problems in pets. Don't use any insecticides or sunscreen that are not specifically labeled for cats or dogs. In fact, even dog insecticides can harm cats, so read the labels, or check with your veterinarian.

Heat stress symptoms include heavy panting, glazed eyes, a rapid heartbeat, restlessness, excessive thirst, lethargy, fever, dizziness, profuse salivation, vomiting, a deep red or purple tongue. Move the animal to a cool or air conditioned place. Apply cold packs or cold towels to her head, neck and chest. Let her drink small amounts of cool water or lick ice cubes. Get her to a veterinarian as soon as possible.

Never advertise free puppies or kittens. Unscrupulous dealers, who may represent themselves as a family who wants pets, look for young animals to sell to research facilities or to be used as bait for dog racing. Be especially suspicious if the persons want all your kittens or puppies. They may be planning to sell them to a laboratory for research purposes or as bait for fighting dogs.

If you don't want a dog who digs in your garden, don't adopt a terrier or terrier mix. Research the breeds. Shelter staff are wizards at detecting the breeds in mixes. Although about 30% of the dogs at shelters are pure bred, the mixes tend to have hybrid vigor and are just as loveable, if not more so.

Do your cat a favor and find room in your yard for a couple of catnip plants. Call your veterinarian or the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center at (888) 426-4435 if you suspect your animal has been poisoned.