

Tips for keeping your pet safe In all types of weather

Summer



Each summer Municipal Enforcement Officers receive numerous calls about pets locked in cars on hot summer days. Many pet owners are unaware that cars left in direct sunlight turn into lethal ovens, reaching fatal temperatures of 130 degrees or more within just a few minutes. Even dogs left in cars in the shade with the windows cracked on hot days are at risk of brain damage or death. Never, ever leave your pet inside the car. If your pet can't come with you when you get out of the car, leave him at home.

Never leave your pet chained or penned up directly in sunlight. Provide a shady area where the animal can retreat, such as a doghouse, porch or shady tree, and ALWAYS provide cool water. Days above 90 degrees, especially with high humidity, are inherently dangerous for your pet. Humidity interferes with an animal's ability to rid itself of excess body heat. Our four-legged friends only perspire around their paws, which is not enough to cool the body. To rid themselves of excess heat, animals pant. Air moves through the nasal passages, which pick up excess heat from the body. As it is expelled through the mouth, the extra heat leaves along with it. Although very efficient, this method of controlling body temperature is severely limited in times of high humidity or when the animal is in close quarters. Cats are generally better at regulating their body temperatures and avoiding overheating in the first place. But don't be fooled---without appropriate shelter and water, they too can overheat.

If you leave an animal indoors, open the windows, keep a fan running, provide plenty of water, and if possible, leave them in a cool location.

Avoid overexerting your animal in hot weather. Exercise is fine when taken in moderation, but obesity, old age, underlying disease and previous bouts of heat stroke can predispose an animal to the condition.

Heatstroke is a medical emergency. If you suspect your pet has heatstroke, you must act quickly and calmly. Have someone call a veterinarian immediately. Lower your pet's body temperature by applying towels soaked in cool water to the hairless areas of the body. Often pets will respond after a few minutes of cooling, only to falter again, with his temperature soaring back up or falling well below what is normal. Remember it is imperative to get the animal to a veterinarian immediately.

Even with emergency treatment, heatstroke can be fatal. The best cure is prevention, and your pets must rely on you to keep them out of harm's way.

Signs of Heatstroke:

- Rapid heartbeat
- Staring
- Anxious expression
- Warm dry skin
- Panting
- Refusal to obey commands
- Collapse
- Vomiting



It is best to keep pets indoors during the winter months, but if this is not possible, outdoor pets must be provided with shelter. Their home should be elevated off the ground to prevent moisture accumulation and have a door of some kind to keep out winter winds, sleet, and snow. Shelters should be insulated or heated. The shelter should be small enough for the animal's body heat to warm the inside, but large enough for the animal to stand, turn around and lay down. Provide bedding material such as straw or cedar chips. Water sources may be heated to permit constant access to unfrozen water; thermal units designed specifically for this purpose are readily available. Outdoor pets require extra calories to keep warm, feed your pet according to its needs when the temperature drops. In severely cold or inclement weather, no pet should be kept outside.

Roaming cats as well as wildlife may climb onto vehicle engines for warmth during cold weather. Be sure to check under the hood before starting your vehicle and honk the horn to startle any animals seeking shelter inside.

Many products used during the winter are toxic or fatal to animals. What follows is a general guide; please consult your veterinarian, animal poison control, and the manufacturer for specifics. Remember, the earlier you seek treatment, the better for your pet!

Poinsettia leaves/stems

Holly berries and leaves

Mistletoe

Christmas tree preservatives

Fireplace colors/salts

Snow sprays/flock

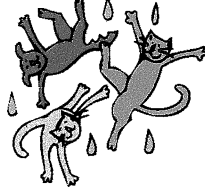
Snow removal salt

Angle hair (spun glass)

Bubbling lights (methylene chloride)

Antifreeze deserves special mention because even a very small amount can be rapidly fatal to pets.

Spring and Fall



Spring and Fall weather usually bring increased rain and wind. Your pet needs to have a place to go where he can stay dry and out of the wind. Air temperature during these seasons is usually still quite low. An animal's body temperature can fall dangerously low if he is exposed to the wind and rain.

Another consideration is the condition of his yard or run. These areas can get very wet and muddy. Your dog should not have to be in a mud pit. Try spreading straw or cedar chips in his area to keep it as dry as possible.