

ISVMA Offers Pet Summer Safety Tips

June 29 2022 9:51 AM



SPRINGFIELD – “Summertime, and the living is easy ...” so goes the classic song, but if it is even slightly warm outside, and with the loud celebrations the season brings, pets are at risk if not given the proper foresight and protection for their human caretakers, making summer not so easy for our furry friends.

The Illinois State Veterinary Medical Association (ISVMA) wants pet owners to understand what they can do to help protect their pets during the good ‘ol summertime.

“When it’s hot out, pet owners can be proactive with proper planning and care so that their dogs, cats, and other pets can be properly cared for when it’s really hot outside,”

says Dr. Devon Hague, President, ISVMA Board of Directors. “And let’s not forget to help shield our pets from the potential shock that holidays, like Independence Day, can present where there could be crowds of strangers, potentially harmful foods (for animals) served at picnics, and the loud and bright fireworks displays!”

If you are on a road trip with your pet, Dr. Hague suggests these helpful tips:

- First and foremost, do not leave an unattended pet in a hot vehicle. Ever.
- Make sure your pet stays hydrated. Give them plenty of cool water and ensure they have seating or riding options to keep them out of the direct sun and properly restrained.
- Create safety boundaries: Keep your pet away from your driving space in the car. It is never wise to let animals rest on your lap, lay in a footwell, or hang out windows and other actions that could cause an accident. It is against the law in Illinois to have a pet in the driver’s seat while the car is in motion.
- There are dangers in hauling your dog in a pickup truck bed. They could jump out, fall, and be subject to airborne hazards.
- When stopped for a break, avoid letting your pet walk on hot surfaces, such as blacktop, concrete parking lots, or sidewalks that can burn tender paws.
- Talk with your veterinarian about hot weather tips and how to keep your pet safe from heat exposure/exhaustion. Know how to recognize the symptoms of heat stress and what first aid you may administer if your pet becomes stressed.

Dr. Hague also says there are other summertime safety issues to keep in mind beyond car travel:

- Take walks or hikes in cooler times of day (morning/evening), and avoid running or walking with your dog in the hottest times of day (mid-morning/noon/early afternoon).
- If you have an outdoor dog, cat, or other animal, ensure they have enough water to drink and have shade options to keep them out of the direct sun. Consider moving them indoors, into a garage or barn with proper ventilation (i.e., a fan), or in a basement where it is cooler than outside during the hottest times of the day.
- Consider a “summer cut” for your pooch, helping him or her to keep their body cooler. Talk with your veterinarian if this is a good plan for your dog.
- Perform frequent coat checks to look for ticks embedded in their fur if they are outdoors. Make sure they are protected with effective anti-parasite collars, powders, treatments, or other preventative options, recommended by your veterinarian.
- Talk with your veterinarian about heartworm protection, even if you have a dog that is primarily indoors. Mosquitoes are equal opportunity organisms, and it only takes a matter of seconds for a bite from a single mosquito to infect your dog. This

is a simple and effective way to keep your dog safe from infection by these deadly parasites.

- Make sure garden and yard fertilizers, pesticides, and chemicals are out of a pet's reach. Also, be sure to read the labels of each chemical to determine the withdrawal time the pet needs to be restricted from the treated area.
- Know that dirt, mud, and standing bodies of water (stagnant ponds) can be breeding grounds for infectious parasites.
- When you have your pet out in larger bodies of water, whether on a boat or at a beach, make sure they are protected with a flotation device or other safety gear as water currents or large waves can be just as dangerous to them as they are to people.

And then there are fireworks that we all know and love on the Fourth of July, and the celebrations tied to the holiday. Dr. Hague suggests the following:

- Never ignite fireworks near any animal, including sparklers, firecrackers, and smoke bombs. Keep pets indoors in a recognizable environment.
- Play calming music in a quiet room that can help mask noises from parties and fireworks. Have their kennel nearby for comfort. Shut windows and close curtains; consider compression or a "thunder" shirt to help keep the pet calm.
- Talk to your veterinarian about medication that could soothe an easily distraught pet during the holiday.
- Never punish pets if they are scared; it will only add to their anxiety.
- Keep horses and farm animals away from fireworks and keep gates and fences secured in advance of the holiday.
- Firework debris is toxic to animals. Make sure remnants are picked up and disposed of quickly and properly.
- If grilling outdoors, some human foods are poisonous to pets, including chocolate for dogs. Do not let guests share table scraps with them and be mindful that wooden or metal grilling skewers can injure pets.