

Heat, Haze & Fireworks: How to Keep Your Pets Safe

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
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ALTON/EDWARDSVILLE - It's hot, humid and hazy in the Riverbend, and the Metro East Humane Society has some tips for pet owners who want to keep their pets safe during adverse weather conditions through 4th of July fireworks.

The National Weather Service in St. Louis has issued a severe heat advisory for our area, with temperatures expected to near 100 degrees Fahrenheit over the next few days. Kids and senior citizens need to be especially careful in this weather, but Belle

Hargraves, an animal caretaker at the Metro East Humane Society, reminds people to be cautious with their pets.

“For dogs, you want to provide plenty of water and try to keep them inside as much as possible,” Hargraves said. “In this kind of heat, we try to keep walks very, very short, like five to ten minutes with plenty of breaks in between.”

Hargraves recommends turning on fans and keeping cats and dogs indoors as much as possible. Some dogs also enjoy laying on cooling pads. If you have outdoor cats, make sure they have a shady area where they can rest.

“And of course, not all dogs love it, but kiddie pools are super fun for them to jump in and stay cool outside,” she added.

Heat is an annual concern in the Midwest, but the air quality is raising new questions about animal safety. Wildfires in Canada have been burning for weeks now, and a smoky haze has officially settled into the St. Louis region as a result.

We have more information about the air quality [here](#), including how long the haze is expected to stick around. In the meantime, pet owners are encouraged to keep an eye on their animals.

“We personally haven’t seen any of our dogs have any issues with the haze as of yet,” Hargraves said. “However, I know some dogs are way more prone to harsh air quality. Dogs with mushy faces, like bulldogs or Frenchies, tend to have a harder time breathing outside anyway. So when you compound that with the haze and the poor air quality, that can definitely take a toll on them.”

She added that replacing your air filter or purchasing an air purifier could be helpful for both pets and people as we navigate these conditions. The Humane Society has found that air purifiers help their “nasally dogs” who are regularly impacted by pollen and other air contaminants.

As we near Independence Day celebrations, many people are searching for ways to keep their pets calm during fireworks displays. Some products, like the [ThunderShirt](#), are helpful for dogs and cats. CBD oil can also have calming effects on anxious pets; you can read more about CBD and animals [here](#).

“CBD is something that we have recently started trying with our shelter dogs, actually,” Hargraves said. “With all of the dogs that we’ve tried it on, it seems to have worked wonders for them.”

Hargraves notes that dogs tend to run and cats tend to hide when scared, so be aware of what reaction your pet might have. She urges owners to make sure their dogs have microchips and that the contact information is correct so dogs can be reunited with their owners if they run off.

If you have a crate for your dog, Hargraves suggests making it a relaxing space, which can help with fireworks anxiety. Cover the crate with a blanket to make it dark and cozy, and throw in some treats and your dog's favorite toys. Hargraves stresses that the crate shouldn't be a disciplinary measure, but rather a tool to keep dogs calm.

“Setting a crate up for your dog is not supposed to be a punishment in any circumstance. It's more so supposed to be like a bedroom for them,” Hargraves explained. “Dogs that live in the outdoors will have that instinct to make a den, so the crate is kind of supposed to mimic that. It's more so like a coping mechanism for them.”

While we wait out the heat, haze and fireworks, make sure to keep your pets safe. To learn more about pet safety, or to find an animal that needs a forever home, visit the [Metro East Humane Society website](#).