



Public Information

City of Los Angeles Department of Animal Services
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Summer Safety Tips for Your Best Friend

Playing safe in summer heat ensures that you and your best friend will fully enjoy the season.

Dogs and cats do not sweat through their skin. They cool themselves by rapid breathing, and when the temperature outside is hot and close to their internal body temperature, it means animals must work hard to stay cool. So when it's hot for you, it's even hotter for them.

Too much heat can be extremely dangerous and sometimes fatal. If your buddy has a shorter nose, like Persian cats and bulldogs, he is more susceptible to heatstroke than breeds with longer noses.

If your dog or cat begins very rapid, noisy breathing, has trouble swallowing and looks very distressed, she could be experiencing heatstroke. Other symptoms include the tongue and gums turning bright red, saliva being thicker than usual, and vomiting. In severe cases, symptoms include the animal becoming unsteady on her feet, the lips and gums turning pale blue or gray, and loss of consciousness.

Heatstroke is an emergency. Get the animal out of the heat. Apply cold, wet towels to the back of the head. Place cold packs wrapped in towels or plain wet towels between the back legs and on the belly. Cool off your furry friend and then take her to the vet immediately.

The best plan is to keep your dog and cat protected from the summer heat.

- Make sure that your dog or cat always has plenty of fresh water to drink. A bucket that holds a gallon or more of water will stay cool longer and is less likely to evaporate in the heat than water in a shallow pan. Some dogs love ice cubes, and you can add a few to the water bowl.
- Dogs and cats do sweat a little through the pads of their feet. The cats I know don't volunteer to have water added to any part of their body, but dogs often enjoy having cool water on their feet to help them cool down, or you can apply rubbing alcohol to their pads. Some dogs enjoy walking through or even lying in a child's wading pool.
- Car interiors heat very quickly in the summer, even with the windows open. If it's 85 degrees outside, it will climb to 102 degrees within ten minutes inside your car. In half an hour, it will reach 120 degrees or more! If it's 90 degrees out, temperatures can top 160 degrees faster than you can walk around the block. Therefore, it is dangerous to leave your dog or cat in a car for even a short amount of time – even just 5 minutes and it's against the law. If he can't go inside at every stop with you, he's safer at home on hot days!
- If longer-coated dogs and cats are brushed regularly, and their coats are in good shape, the coat will serve as insulation from the heat. If the coat has gotten matted, a summer clip will make your buddy much more comfortable and give you a new start at keeping him brushed. Newly clipped animals are more likely to get sunburned where the hair has been cut.

- If your dog spends time in the yard, make sure she has access to shade. Dark coats absorb heat. Lighter coated animals, especially white ones, are at higher risk for skin cancer from exposure to the sun and are more susceptible to sunburn. Shade trees, a covered patio, or a cool spot under the porch can help keep her comfortable. Local and State laws require that a dog must have access to water. The owner can be charged for animal cruelty if the dog cannot get to water.

Your dog and cat want to be with you. You can bet that what they will enjoy most this summer, like always, is being close to you. They will be safer and cooler inside with you, doing what they do best: being your best friend!

The mission of the Los Angeles Department of Animal Services is to promote and protect the health, safety and welfare of animals and people. Call us at 1-888-452LA-PET1/1-888-452-7381 (TTY Hearing impaired: 877-875-8205) or visit the website at www.LAAnimalServices.com to learn more.

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