



City of Los Angeles

Department of Animal Services



LA Animal Services Urges Pet Owners Not to Leave Furry Friends in Hot Cars

How to Help Animals Left Behind in Parked Vehicles

Los Angeles, July 6, 2018 - When the temperature increases outside, the danger of leaving your pet in a vehicle increases. LA Animal Services urges people not to leave their beloved pet behind in the car, informs residents about the law and gives steps that can be taken if you find a pet in danger in a parked vehicle.

What you expect to be a quick stop at the store could mean your pets are suffering or being injured by excessive heat, even if a window is cracked open. An animal in a hot car could suffer brain damage or death.

"Many people just don't know about this risk," said Brenda Barnette, LA Animal Services (LAAS) General Manager, "We're trying to get the word out and prevent needless tragedy so pet guardians do not thoughtlessly or unknowingly leave their companion animal behind in a hot parked car."

If you are not going to be able to take your furry friend in with you every time you get out of the car, make the safe choice and leave him at home. A quick stop may feel like no time at all to you, but it's too long to leave your pet in a vehicle unattended on a warm summer day and endangers the life of your pet.

Not only is the well-being and safety of your pet at risk, leaving your four-legged family member in the car can also be a legal issue for you. In fact, someone accused of leaving an animal in a hot car could face heavy fines, be charged for animal cruelty, and face jail time.

In December 2017, the West Valley Animal Services Center received a report from a citizen that there was a dog inside a vehicle in heat distress. An LAAS Animal Control Officer responded and found the temperatures inside the vehicle ranged from 119-123 degrees. The Officer rescued the dog, named Cali, from the vehicle and transported her to the West Valley center. Once there, an LAAS veterinarian diagnosed the dog as hyperthermic and was able to successfully cool her down. The dog owner has been charged with animal cruelty and their case is currently pending prosecution.

What can you do if you see a pet suffering in a parked car? Good Samaritan bystanders are legally allowed to break into cars if they feel there is imminent danger to the animal inside. Anyone in that situation should first call 911 or any of the six LA City animal shelters at 888-452-7381 and ask to speak to the Officer in Charge.

If the animal is in immediate danger, the car is locked, and law enforcement is not arriving quickly enough to save the animal's life, the law provides immunity from civil and criminal liability to a person causing vehicle damage for the purpose of rescuing the animal.



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If you see a pet in a hot car:

- 1. Immediately take down the vehicle's model, make, color, and license plate number.** These can be used to report the owner for neglect or irresponsible behavior, and also to identify who the owner is.
- 2. Go into the local businesses or buildings nearby and notify a manager or security guard.** Insist that they make an announcement over the intercom with the license plate number to inform the owner of the dire situation.
- 3. If you can't find the owner, call the authorities.** Call the police or the closest animal shelter in the area to come and assess the situation.
- 4. Do not leave the scene.** Signs of heatstroke include restlessness, excessive thirst, heavy panting, dark tongue, rapid heartbeat, fever, vomiting, and lack of coordination. Keep a close eye on the pet for these symptoms, as it could mean that the situation needs to be acted upon very quickly.
- 5. If the authorities take too long, take action.** If you very honestly believe that the pet is in bad condition and showing symptoms of heatstroke, assess the situation and remove the pet from the heat immediately and wait for the authorities to arrive. Check to ensure the car is locked and cannot be opened, break a window if needed but do not use more force than necessary during the rescue.
- 6. Take proper steps to care for the animal.** When the pet is removed from the hot car, the situation isn't necessarily over yet. Get the animal into air conditioning as soon as possible and give him cool water to drink. Continue to stay with the pet until law enforcement arrives.