



Summer Animal Care Information from the Wood County Humane Society

It is important to not only look after yourself over the heat of summer, but you should also take care of your pet's needs. Here are some tips as well as information to help you prepare your pet for the summer heat.

Heat Stress and Stroke

The heat can affect us all; here are some tips to help with the hot weather:

- **All animals must have cool, shady areas available to them.** These can easily be constructed by using tarps or building lean-to's, if trees are not available. Larger animals (horses, livestock, dogs, cats, etc.) should be placed in an area where they are able to move around and seek sure that your caged animals are not in direct sunlight and that their cages are protected from the sun with shade tarps, or placed in the shade of a tree that provides shade all day.
- Make sure that your animals have access to plenty of cool, clean water. It is a good idea to provide several good-sized water containers in case one is split. Ensure the containers are in the shade, try adding some ice to the water to keep it cool longer.
- On very hot days, it is best to walk your pets in the coolness of the early morning or evening. You may even take them to the local beach, creek or river to let them have a paddle to cool down. By avoiding the hottest part of the day, both you and your pets will enjoy the walk even more and your pets will avoid possible dehydration, sunburn and potentially painful paws.
- **Never** leave your pets in a car on a hot day because they cannot cope, even with the windows down. If it feels hot to a person sitting in a parked car, it will feel much hotter to an animal in a fur coat. *Cars can reach 100 degrees plus in a matter of minutes*
- Rabbits and guinea pigs are particularly susceptible to heat and a good remedy is to put a frozen water bottle in their cages so that they can regulate their body temperature. Replace these bottles as required.
- Remember older dogs, short nosed dogs (boxers, bulldogs, pugs, cavalier king Charles spaniels, Pekingese, etc.), and dogs with thick coats can't tolerate the heat. It is best to leave these animals indoors, where it is cool. Likewise, limit time for exercise to early morning and evening hours.
- Be cautious on humid days. Humidity interferes with animals' ability to rid themselves of excess body heat. When we overheat we sweat, and when the sweat dries it takes excess heat with it. 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 picks up excess heat from the body. AS it is expelled through the mouth, the extra heat leaves along high humidity or when the animal is in close quarters.
- Do not leave your animals on or walk on hot pavement. If you have the choice, walk in the grass, as hot pavement can burn the pads on animals' paws.

- The best cure for heat stroke is **prevention** (leaving animals inside). Contact a vet immediately if you observe any of the following signs and symptoms of heat stroke:
 - Excessive, heavy panting
 - Staring
 - Anxious expression
 - Refusal to obey commands
 - Warm, dry skin
 - High fever
 - Rapid heartbeat
 - Vomiting
 - Collapse

Sunscreen

Don't laugh; pets can get sun burnt too! Pets with pink or light colored skin on their ears, forehead, nose, or lips are particularly vulnerable to sunburn and skin cancer. Sunburn in animals can cause problems similar to those it can cause in people, including pain, peeling, and skin cancer. So keep your pet out of the sun between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., and when you do go out, rub a bit of sun block on unprotected areas. Coppertone is a good brand to use, with a minimum SPF of 30.

Parasites

- **Heartworm disease:** Heartworms (*Dirofilaria immitis*) are parasites transmitted by mosquitoes that can potentially be fatal to your dog or cat. Many people are familiar with heartworm disease in dogs, but are unaware that cats may also contract the parasite (heartworm disease was reported in cats in 38 states by the American Heartworm Society); in fact, cats infested with heartworms often have more severe clinical signs than dogs and a poorer prognosis. Have your dog or cat tested for the presence of heartworms by your veterinarian, and ask about heartworm preventatives. Treatment for the disease can be expensive and risky for your pet **prevention is easy and inexpensive**. The fact that your dog only goes outside to urinate and defecate, and the fact that your cat does not go outside at all, does not eliminate the risk of disease. Mosquitoes are everywhere!
- **Fleas:** Normally only adult fleas live on pets, and often they remain there only long enough to feed. Eggs may be laid on the pet, but usually fall off the pet into the environment where conditions are right for them to develop (through a multistage life cycle) into adult fleas. As a result, it is possible to have a substantial flea problem although you have only identified a few or no fleas on your pet. Egg and larval stages can survive in your home all year and in your yard from spring through late fall (all year in warmer climates). Biting and scratching on the lower back, tail, and abdomen are the most common signs of flea infestation and a dermatitis will often flare up in these areas. Flea control involves treatment of the pet and the environment by means of shampoos, sprays, dips, "spot-ons", powders, oral medications, and collars. Your veterinarian can recommend the most appropriate flea prevention/treatment program for your pet. Fleas carry tapeworms, so be sure to have your veterinarian check your pet for these intestinal parasites as well.
- **Ticks:** Yet another parasite that is a common problem during the warmer months. Ticks are not only an irritant and nuisance to your pet, but may transmit several debilitating diseases, such as Lyme disease, babesiosis, and ehrlichiosis. Many flea prevention/treatment products will also help with control of ticks. Your veterinarian can help you recognize ticks and show you the proper way to remove them from your pet (if you simply try to remove the tick by pulling, you may leave its mouthparts embedded within your pet's skin). Owners whose dogs have substantial exposure to ticks (sporting dogs, dogs that go camping, and those spending time in forest preserves or woods) should also ask their veterinarian's advice about the appropriateness of a vaccination for Lyme disease.