

Protect Pets During UV Safety Month

Learn seven tips to protect cats and other pets during the summer.

By Marissa Heflin

Posted: July 1, 2008 2 a.m. EDT

July is UV Safety Month and with summer upon us, organizations such as the National Safety Council and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency are educating people about sun safety and what precautions to take to avoid overexposure to ultraviolet rays.

The consequences are clear: heat exhaustion, skin cancer, eye damage, immune system suppression and premature aging.

Heatstroke in cats and other pets occurs most commonly in the summer months, especially where humidity is high, but it also can happen when not expected, says Scott Johnson, DVM, of the Emergency Animal Hospital of Northwest Austin in Austin, Texas, which takes in about 40 to 60 heat-related incidences a year.

Cat owners need to take special care to keep their cats safe from overheating and other ailments associated with hot weather. Donna DeBonis, DVM, in conjunction with FURminator Inc., offers these tips to help keep cats cool and safe this summer.

1. Never leave your cat in your vehicle. The inside of your car can heat rapidly, causing your cat's body temperature to soar.
2. Make frequent stops when traveling with your cat. Make sure your pet has access to plenty of water during breaks.
3. Groom your cat regularly to remove loose hair and help your cat stay cool.
4. Keep in mind that animals can suffer from sunburn, heat exhaustion and heat stroke—just like humans. To protect your cat's skin, use a pet-approved sunscreen on sensitive areas, such as the nose and tips of the ears.
5. If your cat has outdoor access, make sure it has plenty of water and has access to shade.
6. Kill and repel fleas with a veterinary-recommended flea control product.
7. If you plan to attend a crowded outdoor event, leave your cat at home. The noise and crowds, combined with the heat, can stress your pet.

Car temperature is something else to keep an eye on. With the car windows left slightly open, an outside temperature of 85 degrees can cause a temperature of 102 degrees inside a vehicle within 10 minutes, and 120 degrees within half an hour.

Virtually all states address leaving pets unattended in cars in their animal cruelty laws, but only a few states specifically allow an officer to enter a vehicle to rescue an animal that is being treated cruelly, according to the American Veterinary Medical Association. These states include Arizona, Illinois, North Dakota and Wisconsin.