

Campaign Warns 'Leaving Pets in Hot Car Is a Crime'

L.A. campaign warns pet parents of the consequences of leaving animals in cars.

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Leaving a pet in a car on even a mildly warm day is dangerous, and could result in severe injury or death. The Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office has launched a campaign to remind pet owners that it's against the law to leave pets unattended in hot cars.

To help get the word out, the office is distributing free posters to veterinarians, business owners and residents.

"Leaving your (pet) in a hot car, even one parked in the shade, can be both a deadly mistake and a crime," said Deputy District Attorney Deborah Knaan, animal cruelty case coordinator.

Under California state law, pet owners who leave their animals unattended can be charged with a misdemeanor animal endangerment and face up to six months in jail. If the animal dies, the owner could be charged with felony animal cruelty and face up to three years in state prison.

Even on mildly warm days, when the temperature is 72 degrees or hotter outside, the temperature in a car can be more than 100 degrees, causing severe injury and death to animals, Knaan said.

Studies have shown that with the vehicle 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, according to the District Attorney's Office.