

ASPCA Offers Summer Pet Safety Tips

The organization reminds pet owners to keep cats, other pets safe during hot weather.

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Several easy tips can help keep your kitten or cat safe during summer's heat. "Summertime is a wonderful time for family and friends to get together and enjoy themselves, often with a beloved pet by their side," said Dr. Steven Hansen, senior vice president of the ASPCA's Midwest office. "However, it's important to consider the hidden (and sometimes not-so-hidden) dangers that can harm our favorite furry companions."

Hansen suggested these ways to help keep cats and dogs cool during summer heat and safe during summer activities: Keep pets away from summer barbecues. The food and drinks served at summer parties can be poisonous to pets. "Keep alcoholic beverages away from pets, as they can cause intoxication, depression, comas or even death," Hansen said. "Similarly, remember that the snacks you serve your friends should not be a treat for your pet."

Make sure your pets have plenty of fresh water. Cats and dogs can become dehydrated quickly, so provide access to water, especially when it is hot outdoors.

Provide shade on sunny days. Make sure your pet has a place to get out of the sun, and keep your cat or dog indoors on extremely hot days. Above all, never leave your pet in a parked car. "On a hot day, even with the windows open, a parked automobile can become a furnace in no time," said Dr. Louise Murray, director of medicine at the ASPCA's Bergh Memorial Animal Hospital. "Heatstroke can develop, which is potentially fatal."

Keep your pet pest-free. Be sure to use products specifically manufactured for your pet, as products for dogs and cats differ in their chemical composition. Read directions carefully before applying these products.

Be safe around water. Do not leave your pet unsupervised around pools, lakes and beaches. Do not let your pet drink pool water, as the chlorine and other chemicals can cause stomach upset.

Beware of "high-rise syndrome." Pet owners that live in residences with upper floor windows and doors need to keep window screens tightly secured and keep doors closed. "During warmer months, we see an increase in injured animals as a result of high-rise syndrome, which occurs when pets fall out of windows or doors and are seriously or fatally injured," Murray said.

Keep pets away from fireworks. "While exposure to lit fireworks can potentially result in severe burns or trauma to curious pets, even unused fireworks are hazardous," Hansen said. "Many types of fireworks contain potentially toxic substances such as potassium nitrate, copper, chlorates, arsenic and other heavy metals."

For more summer safety tips, visit the ASPCA website.