



Acton Animal Hospital  
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# Pet Care News

Summer 2006

## Hot Weather Care Tips for Pets

Here are some tips to make summer more comfortable for your pet.



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- **Don't leave your dog in a car for any period of time.**

Many of us know this but a reminder is always wise. It only takes minutes to reach dangerous temperatures inside the car. If you absolutely must leave your dog (although we strongly recommended against it), make sure the windows are left open and it is imperative that it only be for a brief period. Dogs can't sweat in the same way as humans. They thermo-regulate mostly by panting and can sweat minimally through the bottom of their feet.

- **Heat stroke**

Heat stroke is a serious, life-threatening condition that can afflict dogs quite rapidly. Dark-colored dogs are particularly prone to heat stroke because their dark coats absorb heat. Other medical factors that predispose your dog to heat stroke are obesity, laryngeal paralysis and heart disease. Common early signs of heat stroke include panting, excessive salivation, and hyper-excitement. If you suspect heat stroke, seek immediate veterinary attention for your pet.

- **Provide plenty of shade and water**

Never leave your dog tied in a place where it can't find shade or access to water. This seems very commonsense, but sometimes dogs left on chains or leads may wind themselves around a tree and cut off their access to water.

- **Fleas**

Fleas thrive in the moist, humid climate of summer. Flea bites can cause itching as well as allergic reactions (flea-bite dermatitis) resulting in intense itching, crusty skin and hair loss. Fleas can also be carriers for other parasites, such as tapeworms. Dogs that itch will groom themselves and ingest fleas, providing a direct route for tapeworms to develop in the intestines of your pet.

- **Mosquitoes**

Mosquitoes can carry heartworm larvae that may lodge in your dog's pulmonary artery and cause serious health problems. Preventives for fleas and heartworms are available in many different varieties and can be purchased from your veterinarian. Heartworm pills and flea preventatives are relatively inexpensive and far outweigh the nuisance and health hazards triggered by a flea or heartworm infestation.

- **Summer grooming**

Although many people clip or shave their dogs in the summer it may be counterproductive to the goal of cooling your pet. The canine coat is designed to hold heat near the body in the winter, but also to insulate against the heat from the sun in the summer. Leaving your dog's hair coat intact will actually provide a cool microenvironment for your pet. Your pet's fur also helps act as a sunscreen to protect its skin from ultraviolet radiation. Yes, dogs can get sunburn as well.

A dark-colored dog will get a lot hotter in the summer due to his color. If you own a dark-colored dog it may be beneficial to clip it despite the loss of the insulating properties of their hair coat.

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Dogs that are outside in the summer heat should be properly groomed, since a matted coat will trap moisture on the skin providing an excellent environment for skin infections or even worse problems.

- **Allergies**

Allergies are a problem for humans and dogs alike. One type of allergic reaction is called “hot spots.” They look like red, round spots that tend to have a slightly slimy appearance. While hot spots require a veterinarian’s care, the temporary use of tea bags applied directly to these hot spots will help until a veterinary appointment can be made. The tannic acid in the tea bags may help to relieve some of the irritation.

Information for these tips comes from the University of Illinois College of Veterinary Medicine. More articles are available online at [www.cvm.uiuc.edu/petcolumns/](http://www.cvm.uiuc.edu/petcolumns/).

## Pet Dental Care



Dental and gum disease (gingivitis) are among the most common health problems seen in pet dogs and cats. The build-up of plaque and tartar leads to infection, pain, and eventual loss of teeth. Cats are especially prone to erosions of the tooth enamel which can be painful and require extraction of the damaged tooth.

There are several things pet owners can do to slow the build-up of tartar. Dental diets and chew toys can help clean the teeth as the pet chews. Owners can brush their pet’s teeth. It is a good idea to start brushing the pet’s teeth when the pet is first brought into the home.

When tartar build-up occurs or teeth are damaged, teeth can only be cleansed thoroughly at your veterinary hospital with the pet under anesthesia. A dental exam should be part of every annual physical exam to determine if a professional cleaning or other treatment is needed.

## Top Ten Dog Names



A recent survey as reported in “Family Dog” magazine lists the following names as the ten most popular for dogs:

- |         |           |          |          |           |
|---------|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| 1. Max  | 2. Bailey | 3. Buddy | 4. Molly | 5. Maggie |
| 6. Lucy | 7. Daisy  | 8. Bella | 9. Jake  | 10. Rocky |

## Common Household Pet Toxins



As pets are increasingly treated as family members, their exposure to foods and toxins used safely by humans can pose a serious hazard to them. Here are some common household foods and substances that can present various degrees of danger to your pet.

- **Garlic**

Garlic and onions are members of the Allium genus and can be hazardous to your dog or cat’s health. In small amounts your pet should be fine, but should your pet ingest a large amount of onions, the results could be serious. Garlic, onions and other members in the Allium genus can cause oxidative damage to the red blood cell membrane, resulting in hemolysis, or the rupturing of red blood cells.

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Red blood cells serve a number of purposes, but perhaps most importantly, they transfer oxygen to the necessary tissues throughout the body. Therefore, if your pet's red blood cells are damaged, your pet suffers from oxygen deprivation. In addition, substances released from the red blood cells can damage to the kidneys.

- **Macadamia nuts**

While a seemingly benign treat for humans, Macadamia nuts can cause a toxic reaction in dogs. Your pet may develop a transient hind-limb weakness that can be resolved with the appropriate treatment from your veterinarian.

- **Grapes and raisins**

Recently, ingestion of grapes and raisins has been associated with the development of acute renal failure in dogs. At present, there are more questions than answers on this hazard for dogs. Any canine exposure to grapes and/or raisins should be taken seriously, and a veterinarian should be contacted.

- **Chocolate**

When consumed by dogs, chocolate can cause serious effects such as hyper-excitability, tremors, rapid heart rate and seizures. The richer the chocolate, the more dangerous it is to your pet. Dark chocolate and baker's chocolate contain higher concentrations of these dangerous chemicals, posing a very serious and potentially lethal problem for dogs.

- **Antifreeze**

Antifreeze, a staple in most garages, contains ethylene glycol, which seems to have a sweet, palatable taste to animals. Initial signs of this type of poisoning are lethargy and an appearance of "drunkenness." Secondary metabolites of antifreeze are toxic to an animal's kidneys, resulting in renal failure. This is a very serious poisoning that is often difficult to diagnose, and must be treated immediately to protect the animal.

If you suspect that your pet has ingested something that is potentially toxic, immediately contact your local veterinarian or the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center at 888/426-4435.

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