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## **Protecting Your Pet From Hot Weather**

As summer temperatures quickly rise, so do the chances of our pets overheating. The Humane Society/SPCA of Bexar County wants to remind everyone to please take precautions with our furry friends during our hot summer months. The following tips could be a matter of life and death for a pet.

Never leave your pet in a parked car. Even cracked windows won't protect your pet from overheating or suffering from heat stroke during hot summer days.

Exercise your dog in the early morning or evening hours, instead of during the middle of the day when it's the hottest.

If your dog or cat are out during the day, remember that asphalt and concrete can get very hot and burn the pads of your pet's feet. Your pet must always have shelter available to protect it from extreme temperatures and inclement weather. Keep in mind, too, that pets who are older or overweight are more likely to overheat during hot weather.

Since many people treat their lawns with pesticides at this time of year, keep your pet away from unfamiliar yards and grassy areas.

Provide your pet with fresh, cool water every day in a tip-proof bowl.

Keep your pet well-groomed, but resist the temptation to shave off all of his hair in an effort to keep him cool. A pet's coat will protect him from getting sunburned. The coat also acts as cooling insulation for most animals.

Keep your pet away from spots or puddles of auto coolant in the garage, driveway, or parking lots. The sweet taste of this poisonous liquid is tempting to animals, but could be fatal.

Don't let your dog ride in the back of an open vehicle, like a pick-up truck. Unless your dog is riding in the cab with you, your dog could bounce or jump out of the moving vehicle. If your pet must travel in the back of an open vehicle, make sure he's safely tethered to the center of the bed where he's unable to reach the sides and is able to stand or sit on a slip-proof and cool surface.

A car can become a death trap even on a mild sunny day because temperatures can quickly pass the 120 degree mark. Many animals have lost their lives due to owners leaving them in a car. It only takes a few minutes for a pet to become overheated. A dog or cat does not perspire as humans do. Their lungs are their main cooling system so with nothing but overheated air to breathe, they cannot live very long. Should a pet manage to survive the heat, its health could be damaged, including permanent brain damage. Cracking the windows is not enough!

Although it's ideal to bring pets indoors if the temperature is above 90 degrees and there is high humidity, proper shade and plenty of fresh water must be available at all times for the pet. It is important to remember to place the water bowl in the shade so the water does not become hot, and make sure the bowl cannot be easily tipped over. Feeding schedules should remain the same. Even in the shade, temperatures can reach the high 90's. If possible, bring the pets into the home for an occasional relief from the heat. Hot days are particularly difficult on older, sick, or overweight animals.

It is best to avoid excessive exercise on hot days, but if you do take a walk or jog with your pet, make sure to give it plenty of water at least 30 minutes before exercising.

### **Heatstroke**

**Symptoms of heatstroke include** panting, staring, anxious expression, refusal to obey commands, warm, dry skin, high fever, rapid heartbeat, vomiting, and collapse.

### **What to do if you suspect your pet is suffering from heatstroke:**

If an animal becomes overcome by heat exhaustion, you can give immediate first aid by cooling him with cold water and ice or by applying towels soaked in cool water to the hairless areas of the body. Often the pet will respond after a few minutes of cooling, only to falter again with his temperature soaring back up or falling well below what is normal. It is crucial to get the pet to a veterinarian as soon as possible where further treatment can be applied. Even with treatment, heatstroke can be fatal so the best cure is prevention. Summer does not have to be fraught with peril - with ample precaution, both pet owners and their furry companions can enjoy those long, hot, dog days of summer!