

Summer Safety

Most people look forward to enjoying summer activities with their canine companions. What could be better than a road or camping trip with your best friend, complete with frolicking through fields and plunging into streams? But for many veterinarians, summer weather brings endless days of patients with flea allergy, foxtails, and preventable infections or injuries acquired during summer activities. Here are a few tips to ensure that Fido stays safe.

On the road again

If you are taking your pup on a trip, make sure you bring the following supplies: food, water, and bowls; extra leash; harness, seat belt, crate, or other method of restraint for the car; bedding; toys and chews; medications; license and id tags; contact information for vet (plus copy of medical record if your dog has ongoing medical issues); and a pet first aid kit or book. Before leaving, look online to identify pet emergency clinics along your route. You should also strongly consider getting an identification microchip implanted prior to your trip. This is a simple outpatient procedure that enables you to register your pet in a national database.

Never leave your dog in the car unattended!

Next, contact the places you will be staying and make sure they allow pets (be sure to ask about size/breed restrictions). There are several excellent books detailing pet-friendly accommodations and activities in California.

If you're driving, make sure your pet is comfortable in the car. Never leave your dog in the car unattended. Even with the windows cracked, a car can reach dangerously high temperatures within a matter of minutes. If you're flying, contact your airline well in advance. Ask about pet size regulations and find out whether you need a health certificate. If you feel your dog needs tranquilizers before travel, talk to your vet to learn about the pros and cons.

Hot time! Summer in the city

Heat stroke can occur from being left in a hot vehicle, over-exercising in hot weather or simply from exposure to high temperatures. To prevent it, make sure your dog always has access to shade or a cooled area, offer plenty of fresh water, and stop outdoor exercise if your dog is unable to keep up.

Signs of heat stroke include rapid breathing and heart rate, vomiting, diarrhea, depression, and collapse. If untreated, these can progress to seizures, coma, and death.

If you suspect your dog has heat stroke, take him to the nearest emergency clinic immediately. On the way there, attempt to cool him with a fan or by applying cool water to his body. Don't use ice water, as this will cause his vessels to constrict and make it harder for his body to release heat.

Foxtail folly

Foxtails are nasty grass bristles that show up in summer and are found anywhere that grass or weeds have been allowed to grow, produce seeds, and dry. Foxtails can work their way into any orifice, as well as between the toes and directly under



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the skin. Signs of an embedded foxtail include severe discomfort, swelling, redness, and draining tracts in the skin. If the foxtail is in the ear, the dog will usually violently shake his head; if in the nose, the dog will violently sneeze.

If you think your dog has a foxtail, take him to the vet within 24 hours. To prevent foxtails, keep your dog on a leash around un-mowed areas. If you have a longhaired dog, consider trimming his feet, ears, and underside during the summer. Check your dog's hair and feet for foxtails after every outdoor activity so you can remove them before they embed.

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Infections, parasites and other nasties

The most common contagious problem in the summer is fleas. They thrive during warm summer months and their effects can range from being a mild itchy hassle to causing severe discomfort and skin infections in allergic dogs. Most vets

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strongly recommend applying a safe topical flea control product such as Advantage or Frontline monthly to prevent infection.

There are also internal infections, such as giardia and leptospirosis, which dogs can get from drinking from contaminated streams or eating waste. These may cause more serious symptoms such as vomiting, diarrhea, or internal organ damage. Tell your vet about planned outdoor activities and ask whether your dog needs any additional vaccines or preventive care.

Remember, your dog enjoys the summer as much as you do, and with these tips you can keep him safe and at your side all summer long! 🐾

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 **Emilia Gordon, DVM** is Medical Director of the Berkeley-East Bay Humane Society (BEBHS). BEBHS is a private nonprofit organization dedicated to placing homeless animals with committed caretakers; to developing healthy relationships between pets and people through education, training and counseling; and to promoting the humane treatment of all animals. In addition to housing an animal shelter, BEBHS operates a veterinary hospital offering comprehensive, affordable care to the public with proceeds benefiting shelter animal medical care.