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Summer is a time for vacations, barbecues, parties, swimming, and outdoor fun. However, it's important to remember several safety measures when bringing your pets along for summer activities. Whether swimming at the beach or keeping your pets cool in hot temperatures, here are some tips to keep your pets safe during the summer and avoid a trip to the emergency room.

## Beach and Pool Safety



Nothing is better than lounging around a pool or swimming in a lake during the summer. Where else would you want to be when the temperatures start to soar? You and your pet can both cool off by swimming. If you own a Labrador Retriever or another water dog breed, you'll have a swimming buddy by default! However, when your dog is around water or swimming, there are some precautions you should take.

### Make sure your dog knows how to swim

Dogs are not all born to swim (some don't even want to try). If you know you'll be around water and want to ensure your pup is safe, and it's a good idea to gradually introduce them to swimming before you hit the lake. Introducing your pet to water when they are younger is also better.

- Start by getting into the water with your pup and introducing them to shallow water. If your dog sees you in the water with him, it will help him become more confident.
- As your dog paddles with his front legs, gently lift his back legs to demonstrate how to float.

- The most important thing is not to force it. Ensure your dog gets out of the water if he is nervous or scared. Keeping your dog relaxed during water time is essential.
- Also important is to learn CPR for dogs in case of an emergency.

## Always keep an eye out for your pet

Always know where your pet is when you're near a body of water, whether it's the backyard pool or the ocean. Many dogs do not enjoy swimming, and some breeds must be especially cautious when swimming (e.g., Bulldogs, Pugs, Shih-Tzus). These brachycephalic breeds have flat faces, short snouts, and large chests, making them tire out quickly when swimming.

If you're swimming in a pool with your dog, make sure he swims laps and doesn't just lap up the water. A dog consuming excessive chlorinated pool water can experience nausea, vomiting, and esophageal erosion.

Stop your dog if you notice him trying to drink from the ocean. Drinking a lot of salt water affects a dog's blood sodium and can result in seizures. If you catch your dog drinking seawater, watch for any physical changes. It might be worth checking their sodium level if your dog gets lethargic and almost dull. Providing fresh water helps your dog avoid drinking from the ocean, so if they do lap up salt water, the freshwater will help fix their sodium levels.

Your dog can get sick from the water's salt, bacteria, and parasites. If your dog is swimming or playing in the ocean, a few mouthfuls of salt water may only cause diarrhea. But stop your dog from drinking if you see them gulping down seawater.


Rinsing your dog's paws with fresh water after leaving the beach can prevent skin and paw irritation.



It is also essential to monitor puppies carefully. Although swimming may be exciting, puppies are still babies and will tire quickly.


## Be aware of water conditions

**Protect Your Pets from Harmful Algae Blooms**



Blue-green algae can form harmful blooms in lakes, ponds, and rivers that make the water murky, and can sometimes make the water look like pea soup or paint. These blooms may produce toxins and could make pets and people sick.

- If you see water like this, do not allow your pet to swim in or drink the water.
- Rinse pets off immediately if they come into contact with an algae bloom.



Call your vet immediately if your pet has been around an algae bloom and shows symptoms such as vomiting, staggering, drooling, or convulsions.

You should keep your pup away from blue-green algae because the water can make him sick. Cyanobacteria — or blue-green algae — can cause liver failure in your pet. Symptoms come on very fast and are usually vomiting and lethargy.

Additional symptoms include:

- Seizures
- Panting
- Excessive drooling
- Respiratory failure
- Diarrhea
- Disorientation

Finding algae blooms on beaches and lakes is becoming more common, so it is crucial to do a little research before heading out. Don't just assume a pond is a place where your dog can drink. Check online for news reports and your town's beach or lake water quality updates.

Often, toxic algae blooms appear as pea-green paint or slime on the water's surface. The good thing is that an algae bloom has the advantage of being visible, so you really can't miss it.

The algae film often concentrates along shorelines where animals may drink or swim. Take precautions before allowing your pet to jump into a body of water. And be sure to rinse your pet with clean water after he goes for a swim; the algae can stick to his fur and later be ingested if he licks himself.

## Use a life jacket

In addition to keeping your dog afloat, dog life jackets make it easier for you to spot them in the water. If you are taking your pet out on a boat, you may consider purchasing one.

Life jackets are necessary for taking your dog on a boat or kayak. Placing your dog in a life jacket if you paddle board is essential, too — if they fall off the board, you'll tip trying to get them on the paddle board with you. So you want to make sure that they have a life jacket.



There aren't safety classifications or recommendations for dog life jackets, but make sure you test the coat before using it. Put it on your dog, and ensure it's a good fit and comfortable.

If you have access to a pool, test the life jacket to see if it's buoyant enough. It may look like a good life jacket, but it might not have enough buoyancy to keep your dog afloat. Or if the buoyancy is in the wrong place, they could flip them over and make them more likely to drown.

Stick to reputable brands of life jackets from companies like Ruffwear. This isn't the time to buy fashionable outerwear — just because it looks cute or trendy doesn't mean it'll help your dog.

## Watch what your dog eats

When dead fish and crabs wash up on shore, dogs may be interested in snacking on them. While they may look tasty for your dog, the creatures may contain deadly toxins that can make them sick.

Sand is another thing that some dogs end up eating at the beach. It is often accidentally ingested when digging in the sand or repeatedly picking up beach toys. Sand impaction can occur if a dog swallows enough sand and requires immediate veterinary assistance. Sand shrink wraps in the colon, and treatment for ingesting sand includes administering mineral water or oil enemas to help push the sand through. Vomiting, dehydration, and abdominal pain are signs of this severe condition.



Summer is the perfect time to spend with your family, including your pets. With a little planning and prevention, our four-legged friends can enjoy the outdoors and summer getaways right along with us while staying safe and healthy at the same time.