



Coping with summer

It's important to not only look after yourself over the heat of Summer, but you should also take care of your pets' needs. Here are a few tips to help you prepare your pet for the Summer heat.

Heat Stress

The heat can affect us all. Here are a few tips to help with the heat:

- On very hot days, it is best to walk your pets in the coolness of the early morning or evening. You may even take them to the local beach, creek or river to let them have a paddle to cool down. By avoiding the hottest part of the day, both you and your pets will enjoy the walk even more and your pets will avoid possible dehydration, sunburn and potentially painful paws.
- All pets must have cool, shady areas. Cats and dogs are able to move around and seek shade, but small animals such as rabbits, guinea pigs and birds can't move from their cages. Make sure that your caged animals are not in direct sunlight and that their cages are protected from the sun as the shade moves.
- Make sure that your pets have access to plenty of cool water. It is a good idea to provide several good-sized water containers in case one is spilt. Ensure the containers are in the shade, try adding some ice to the water to keep it cool for longer.
- Consider using a small swimming pool (or a child's clam shell), fill it with water and place in the shade. Your dog can then wade in the water to keep cool. If your pets share your yard with children, remember to have all necessary precautions in place, including fencing, in order to keep them safe.
- Never leave your pets in a car on a hot day as they will not cope, even with the windows down. If it feels hot to a person sitting in a parked car, it will feel much hotter to an animal in a fur coat.
- Rabbits and guinea pigs are particularly susceptible to heat and a good remedy is to put a frozen water bottle in their cages so that they can regulate their body temperature. Replace these bottles as required.
- Small animals such as rabbits, guineapigs and ferrets, as well as kittens and puppies, cope best if brought inside. If allowed free run in a laundry or bathroom, they will benefit from the cool tiles. If this is not possible, drape their cage with wet towels and provide a sturdy icepack or frozen water bottle for the animal to lean against so it can regulate its own body temperature.

- If your animal seems to be in discomfort, try wetting its feet and misting water onto its face. This is an option for dogs, cats, ferrets, poultry and caged birds as many animals control their inner temperature through their feet. It's important not to saturate a bird's feathers as this can cause them to go into shock.

Sunscreen

- Don't laugh, pets can get sunburnt too! Pets with pink or light coloured skin on their ears or nose are particularly vulnerable to sunburn and skin cancer. Special sunscreen for animals can be applied to these areas, to help protect pets from harmful UV rays.

Fleas and Ticks

- In the warmer months, fleas and ticks are common parasites. They cause severe itching and inflammation of the skin, leading to dermatitis. Make sure your pet's treatments are up to date to keep them comfortable all summer. If you need further information on the treatments available contact the RSPCA Veterinary Clinic or your local vet.

By taking some extra precautions over Summer, you and your pet will be happy and safe this Summer!