

**Granite State Home & Garden
Immediate Release**

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Take Care of Pets in the Heat

By

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It's high summer and the recent heat wave reminds us to take precautions to protect pets from dangerous heat-related illnesses.

Pets left in a closed vehicle parked in direct sunlight can be at risk for hyperthermia-related illness and death. Although the risk increases during the hot summer months, leaving a pet in a closed vehicle at any time of the year can raise the level of risk. Studies show that full exposure to sunlight is more critical than the ambient air temperature as a factor in determining internal vehicle temperature. How quickly a pet can suffer a heat related illness will vary depending on the particular conditions. For example, air and surface temperatures of a car will differ depending on how long the car has been parked, whether it is in direct sunlight, and the degree of ventilation.

Residents of New Hampshire, as well as visitors to the State, should be aware that "it shall be a cruelty to confine an animal in a motor vehicle or other enclosed space in which the temperature is either so high or so low as to cause serious harm to the animal" (RSA 644:8-aa).

The following tips are important preventive measures for pets.

- **Do not leave a pet unattended in the car on a warm or sunny day.** Cars quickly heat up to a dangerous temperature, even with the window slightly open. Pets in a closed vehicle may suffer irreversible organ damage or die. If you see an animal in distress in a parked car, contact the nearest animal shelter or police.
- **Shade and water are a must.** Use care when leaving a dog outdoors unattended, either loose or on a chain or tether. Anytime your pet is outside, make sure he or she has protection from heat and sun. An enclosed doghouse may not provide adequate ventilation to offer relief from heat. It is also important to provide plenty of fresh water. Heat stroke can be fatal for pets as well as people.

- **When taking a dog for a walk on a hot day**, plan for shorter walks midday, when temperatures peak, and longer walks in the morning and evening when it's cooler. Hot sidewalks or asphalt can damage the pads on a dog's paws, so walk on the grass when possible.

Recognize the signs of heatstroke in pets. In case of an emergency, it's important to be able to identify the symptoms of heat stress caused by exposure to extreme temperatures. When in doubt, contact your veterinarian immediately. Some signs of heatstroke are: heavy panting, glazed eyes, a rapid heartbeat, restlessness, excessive thirst, lethargy, fever, dizziness, lack of coordination, profuse salivation, vomiting, a deep red or purple tongue, and unconsciousness. If the animal shows symptoms of heatstroke, take steps immediately to gradually lower her body temperature and contact your veterinarian as soon as possible.

If you fear your pet may be suffering heatstroke, follow these tips could save its life:

- Move the animal into the shade or an air-conditioned area.
- Apply ice packs or cold towels to your pet's head, neck and chest or run cool (not cold) water over your pet.
- Let your pet drink small amounts of cool water or lick ice cubes.
- Take your pet directly to a veterinarian.

For more information about this and other animal health issues, contact the NH Dept. of Agriculture, Markets & Food, Division of Animal Industry at 271-2404 or visit www.agriculture.nh.gov.

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