



Pet News

Summer 2017

Summer Safety For Pets

We all love spending the long sunny days of summer outdoors with our furry friends but being over eager in hot weather can spell disaster.

All pets are at an increased risk of overheating if exposed to high temperatures and/or high humidity without adequate shade and water. Some of our pets are more at risk of developing heatstroke, especially Huskies and Malamutes who are built for cold weather, and the short nose, flat faced breeds such as Bulldogs, Pugs, Boxers, and Himalayan and Persian cats.

Other risk factors include obesity, heart and lung disease and (very old and very young) and extreme exercise.

Dogs have a small number of sweat glands in their paws but this does little to help regulate

body temperature. Panting allows cooling through the evaporation of fluids from the respiratory tract. Panting becomes less efficient with increasing humidity. Multi-organ damage occurs at body temperatures above 42 degrees Celsius. The kidney, liver, gut, blood and central nervous systems may all be affected.

Signs of overheating/heatstroke include:

- ✿ restlessness
- ✿ heavy panting
- ✿ extremely red gums and tongue
- ✿ profuse salivation
- ✿ fever
- ✿ lethargy and collapse
- ✿ vomiting/ diarrhoea
- ✿ seizures and coma.

What to do if overheating occurs?

At the first sign of overheating immediately take action to cool down your pet. Move it to a cooler area, for example inside with air conditioning or in front of a fan.

Hose down or spray your pet with water or use cool wet cloths/towels placed on the neck, inside the legs and belly. Do not use ice cold liquids as this can actually stop the release of heat. If the animal is able to drink, give small amounts of water, not ice cubes. If it can't or won't drink, wet the tongue with tepid water. Take care not to overcool the animal. Take your pet to a vet clinic ASAP.

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How can we help avoid our pets getting heatstroke?

Providing plenty of shade and water is a good start. Limit exercise or outdoor activity on excessively hot days, take water for them, allow plenty of breaks, and go early in the morning or later in the evenings when temperatures are lower. Bitumen and foot paths can burn footpads so test these surfaces using your hand; if it's too hot for your hand it's too hot for their feet. Never leave your dog in a parked car – not even in the shade with the windows down as the temperature rises very quickly inside the car. Have dogs with long hair or thick coats groomed, but not completely shaved. Fur not only insulates the body

in cold weather but also helps slow down the process of heat absorption.

Avoid using muzzles that restrict breathing. Other pets such as rabbits, mice, rats and guinea pigs, are also highly susceptible to heatstroke, as they don't have sweat glands,



they rely on the environment to cool them down. They need easy access to shade throughout the course of the day, along with fresh cool water. Providing a frozen water bottle for the animal to lick or lean against is a good idea as is feeding them high water content foods such as cucumber, lettuce, leafy greens or berries. Never leave their cage/enclosure near a sunny window or in direct sunlight. Consider increasing the size of their enclosure to help with air flow and leave a damp towel inside the enclosure to mimic the temperature and feeling of an underground burrow.

Not only is the heat an issue over summer but also consider what your pet might eat particularly over the Christmas and New Year period when there are lots of celebrations and barbeques going on. Chocolate in large quantities is toxic, large amounts of fat can lead to issues such as pancreatitis. Bones, both cooked and raw, corn cobs and kebab sticks can all cause intestinal blockages and perforations.

Surprisingly, not all dogs are good swimmers so consider purchasing a life jacket/buoyancy vest if you intend on doing lots of water activities with your dog.

See our article later in this newsletter called "The Perills of Christmas Treats For Pets" for further information.

Allergy Awareness

What are allergies and what do they look like in pets?

Allergic conditions in dogs, and to a lesser degree cats, are a common problem in the warmer months in New Zealand. An allergy occurs when the animal's immune system over-reacts to an allergen to which it is exposed. An allergen is capable of triggering an allergic response. There are a number of sources of allergens. Common allergens in New Zealand include pollen, grasses and other plants, fleas, food, and dust mites. Environmental and flea allergies are more likely to occur in the warmer months when there are more of these allergens around.

The most common manifestation of allergies in pets is itchy skin. The stomach and groin area, or the feet are most common, but itching can affect any part of the body, including the ears. Some allergies affect the respiratory system and present as coughing and sneezing, and occasionally nasal or eye discharge. Gastrointestinal issues – vomiting and diarrhoea – can also be indicators of an allergic reaction.

Types of allergies

Atopy: is a broad term referring to the tendency to develop allergic reactions.

Signs of atopy include:

- ✦ Red, itchy, inflamed skin in the groin, abdomen and armpits. In severe cases the whole body may be affected, skin infections can develop when the animal constantly licks and chews at one specific location.
- ✦ Rubbing the face. The muzzle and around the eyes may be affected.
- ✦ Chewing feet. The fur is often discoloured a red-brown colour.
- ✦ The skin between the toes and pads may be red and inflamed and may smell.
- ✦ Itchy ears. These may be red, and have a discharge and odour.



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❖ Asthma-like signs such as wheezing and respiratory problems (more common in cats).

Flea allergy dermatitis: This condition is a hypersensitivity reaction to the various compounds in flea saliva. Some animals are very susceptible to flea allergies, while others may be non-allergic. Allergic animals may experience intense itching. Both cats and dogs may scratch or lick intensely at one or more of these spots and develop a skin infection.

Contact dermatitis: This condition occurs when an animal has an allergy to carpet, cleaning agents, plastics, or some other substance they come in to contact with. Contact dermatitis manifests as itchy red lumps in the groin, abdomen and feet. Hair loss can occur in chronic cases.

Food allergies: Many foods, or specific food ingredients, can also cause allergies. Food allergies are commonly a response to the protein component of the food, such as beef, lamb, chicken, egg, soy, wheat or corn. Food allergies can manifest as itchy skin, usually around the face and legs, and gastrointestinal issues (vomiting and diarrhoea).

Severe allergic reactions (anaphylaxis): Dogs and cats, like people, can experience severe allergic reactions. These reactions are usually in response to an insect bite or sting, contact with a particular plant, or ingesting various foods or drugs. In mild to moderate cases hives and swelling may occur, but more serious cases can involve

breathing difficulty, uncontrolled urination and defaecation, shock, and potentially death. These reactions can be an emergency, so if it occurs you should contact the vet as soon as possible.

Treating allergies

Treating allergic conditions can be challenging and frustrating. Removal of the offending allergen, if known, is usually curative, but it can often be difficult to pinpoint the exact cause, especially in the case of atopy.

If your pet is suffering from a suspected allergy, you should visit your vet as they will be able to diagnose the type of allergy and recommend the best treatment options. Antihistamine may be useful in severe allergic reactions, but you should always seek veterinary advice before administering these to your pets.

The first step in treatment is to stop the itching. There are a variety of anti-itch medications available that can be given in tablet and injectable forms, and include steroids and monoclonal antibody therapy.

Prescription diets are available for allergic dogs. Some of these help support the skin to repair itself and be an effective defensive barrier, while others contain novel proteins and as such are 'safe' for dogs with food allergies.

Shampoos, medicated washes and creams may be indicated where skin has become superficially infected. Antibiotics may be indicated in cases where infection has reached deeper layers of the skin.



The Dreaded Barley Grass Season

Barley grass seeds are abundant at this time of the year. Long haired animals are particularly at risk. Barley grass fronds stick to our pets fur, they pass easily through the skin and are capable of invading your dogs body. Because of the minute barbs on the bristles, the fronds can travel relatively quickly through the body. If they enter the abdomen or chest cavities the effects can be fatal. We recently heard of an autopsy that revealed a Barley grass seed in the heart of a much loved

working dog. In the eye the barbs can cause ulcers, and in ears may cause rupture of the ear drum. If you suspect your dog has a barley grass seed seek veterinary attention as soon as possible.

Symptoms of barley grass invasion include excessive head shaking and scratching of the ears. Excessive licking of the entry wound may indicate a seed is present in the skin. Your vet will use equipment to remove the seed.



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This procedure sometimes requires sedation of your pet if the seed is deeply embedded.

Ways to prevent your pets from a barley grass include thoroughly

examining your pets coat every day during the season, regular brushing and trimming around the foot pads and ears. Prevention is the key so that you and your pet can avoid this common and painful summer issue.

The Perils of Christmas Treats for Pets

As much as we all love a good Christmas day lunch, some of the goodies we enjoy can cause all sorts of problems for your pets if allowed the chance to get into them.

The obvious one we all know about is chocolate. Avoid placing chocolate presents under the tree as a dog can very easily sniff them out through the wrapping. Chocolate contains theobromine and caffeine both of which can be toxic to your pet causing heart and neurological issues. Signs of chocolate poisoning usually occur 6-12 hours after eating the chocolates. They include vomiting, diarrhoea, stomach pain, hyperactivity, tremors and seizures.

So what do you do if your dog eats the chocolate treats?

The toxic level depends on the size of your dog and the cocoa percentage of the chocolate it has eaten. The darker the chocolate the more toxic it is. A 10 kg dog only needs to eat 13grams of dark cooking chocolate for toxic signs to occur. There are variable chocolate toxicity calculators online that can help you calculate the risk depending on the size of your dog, the type of chocolate and how much it has eaten. However, if your dog eats chocolate or starts to show any of the above mentioned signs it is important you get them in to your nearest VetEnt clinic as soon as possible. The vet will control seizures, rehydrate your pet and give activated charcoal to bind the remaining toxins. Chocolate poisoning is best avoided, but if treated promptly dogs can recover well.

Another kiwi Christmas favourite is cooked ham on the bone. Unfortunately both the ham and the bone are a big no no for your pets. Ham and other cured meats contain a high salt content that can cause electrolyte disturbances, dehydration and risks of pancreatitis. The bone may be a lot less salty but can be even more dangerous. The cooked bone can be very brittle and break up as your dog chews on it. Bone pieces can cause intestinal obstruction and puncture, both of which are a surgical emergency.

Your dog may not show signs immediately. Look out for vomiting, diarrhoea, lethargy and inappetance. If your dog is displaying these signs and the ham bone is missing you need to get them into your vet as soon as possible.

Although chocolate and ham are the obvious threats other things to keep your pets away from this festive season include; corn on the cob, avocado stones, grapes, raisins, onions, lollies and citrus. Save these treats for yourselves and have a very Merry Christmas!



Kennels and Vaccinations

IMPORTANT REMINDER.....

If you plan on going away on holiday over summer without your pet, it is important to remember that kennels and catteries require vaccinations to be up-to-date for your pet to be able to stay.

Dogs need to be fully vaccinated against kennel cough. Because these are high-challenge environments with increased risk of infection, it is often necessary to have your pet vaccinated more frequently than they would otherwise need to be.

Please check with your kennel or cattery as they often have differing requirements.

This is an important action to take ASAP as there is usually a stand-down period after vaccination.

Don't leave it to the week before you go, pop in and see the team at your local VetEnt and they can make sure your furry friend is fully protected.