

Pet care in Summer



Our vets' advice on keeping
your pets happy and healthy
over the summer months

Keep pets cool

With temperatures rising, summer can be an uncomfortable season for our pets. It's just like us wearing a long thick wool coat on a baking hot day!

Here's our vets' top tips on keeping your furry friends cool and happy this summer:

The temperature in a car can increase rapidly even on a warm day

Dogs

- On a hot summer's day walk dogs in the morning or evening – before 8am and after 5pm is best to stop them overheating.
- Pavements and sand can get very hot in the middle of the day and can burn your dog's paws. Check the temperature of the pavement with your own hand – if it feels too hot for you, it'll be too hot for your dog's paws.
- Never leave your dog alone in the car - even on a cloudy day with the windows down, temperatures inside the car will rapidly climb and it can be fatal.
- If you're driving with your dog, make sure they are safely secured in your car. Don't let them lean out of the window. Their eyes or nose can be injured by debris or small stones kicked up from the road.
- Give long-haired dogs a summer haircut to help keep them cool.





**Make sure
your cats have
access to
shade**

Cats

- Make sure your cats have access to shade during the day.
- Don't leave them in cars, caravans or conservatories – they can quickly overheat.
- Cats need access to plenty of clean drinking water throughout the day.
- If your cat has long hair, you can help keep them cool by giving them a summer trim.

Rabbits and guinea pigs

- Don't leave hutches in direct sunlight. Make sure they have a shady area to relax in if they get too hot – their hutch roof must be solid for shade and safety and their exercise run should also have a covered area.
- Never keep your rabbit or guinea pig in a greenhouse or conservatory – they can quickly overheat.
- Make sure to change their water regularly throughout the day so it stays cool and clean.
- Leave a glass jar filled with ice cubes so they have something cool to lie against in hot weather.



Small pets

- Give pets some shade.
- Keep their cage out of direct sunlight and away from places likely to become hot.
- Make sure your pets' bottle is topped up with fresh water to help prevent dehydration.
- Keep small pets cool by freezing a bottle of water and placing it on the outside of their cage near their sleeping area. Don't put it inside their cage because they might get too cold.



Birds

- Make sure your feathered friends have plenty of water throughout the day.
- Give your chickens an area to dust bathe – they'll appreciate the chance to get 'clean' in warm weather.
- Keep your hen house well ventilated. Putting wire mesh across the windows to give your hens plenty of fresh air whilst still keeping them safe.
- Check the hen house every week for red mite and use a preventive treatment regularly.
- If your hens have any bald patches, they could get sunburn. Use pet-safe sun cream on their bare bits and keep them out of the midday sun.
- Never put your bird cage close to the window or in direct sunlight – they can quickly overheat.



Fish

- Check the temperature of your fish tank regularly to make sure it stays in the preferred range for the type of fish you have.
- Make sure outdoor ponds have a shaded area as they can get very hot in the summer.



Warning!

Never leave pets in cars, conservatories or caravans unattended

Even with a window open they can become dangerously hot very quickly. 22°C outside can become an unbearable 41°C inside in just 20 minutes. Overheating can lead to kidney failure, long-term damage to other organs and heatstroke which can all be fatal. If you see a dog in a hot car, call 999 if you can't find the owner immediately. A quick response can save a pet's life.

Don't forget the sunscreen

Pet's skin can burn just like human skin and pets with white or very short coats are particularly susceptible. In the summer, areas of skin with little or no fur, like noses and ear tips, should be covered with a high factor pet friendly sunscreen every day. Failing to do this can result in painful sunburn, which also increases the risk of skin cancer in later life.



Signs of heatstroke in pets

Because of their small size and furry coats, our pets are more likely to feel the heat than we are. Keep an eye on your pet for any signs of heatstroke.

Signs of heatstroke in dogs and cats

- Excessive panting
- Extreme drooling
- Distress
- Collapse

Signs of heatstroke in rabbits, guinea pigs and small pets

- Unusual or extreme tiredness
- Drooling
- Shallow, rapid breathing
- Unconsciousness or fits

Just like humans, pets can suffer from heatstroke

First Aid for heatstroke

If you think your pet is suffering from heatstroke call your vet for advice, and administer first aid:

- Dab your pet with towels soaked in cool but not ice cold water and place them near a fan.
- Make sure they have as much cool water to drink as they want.
- With cats and dogs, gently massage their legs to help maintain the blood flow.
- Take your pet to your vet, even if they seem to have made a full recovery.



The perils of pollen

As temperatures go up, so does the pollen count. This can be just as irritating for humans as our four-legged friends, who can often suffer from pollen allergies too.

Symptoms like itchy eyes and runny noses can get dogs down and make moggies miserable, but there are plenty of things we can do to make our pets feel better.

Take the lead

If your dog likes to run through flowerbeds or roll in the grass, try keeping them on a lead for parts of your walk or avoid these areas when off the lead. Pollen can cling to pet fur and cause irritation.

A clean sweep

Wipe your pet's paws and face after they've been out to remove traces of pollen. You can use unscented baby wipes but a damp cloth will do just as well.

Wash and brush up

Trim long hair and groom with a specialist brush that reaches the under layers of fur where pollen might be hiding and indulge your pet in weekly baths.

Finally...

Clean any bedding or surfaces that your pets come into regular contact with to get rid of any lingering pollen.

Treatments

Wipes, shampoos, soaps and specialist brushes are available from pet shops and should do the trick for mild pollen allergies.

For severe symptoms it's really important you take your pet to the vet so they can determine the best treatment for them.



Garden dangers

Our pets often spend a lot of time out and about in the garden, especially in summer, so how can we make a safe place for them?

Dangerous garden chemicals:

Store garden chemicals safely out of the way of children and pets. Liquids such as white spirit and barbecue lighter fluids can cause serious poisoning if they get into your pet's system, either by swallowing, licking from their fur, being in contact with the skin, or being inhaled.

- **Pestkillers (pesticides) and weedkillers (herbicides):** Always follow the instructions carefully. Some can harm pets if they are accidentally swallowed. Plants treated may be poisonous - if eaten or even from being brushed against for certain chemicals.
- **Slug pellets:** Slug and snail pellets containing metaldehyde can poison and kill a dog or cat within hours. We highly recommend not using these in gardens where pets play. Try using pet-proof slug traps or organic alternatives to poisons. Ask your local garden centre for expert advice about traditional and chemical-free pest controls.
- **Foxes and other predators:** Urban foxes are especially successful at sneaking into your garden and could kill outdoor pets, like rabbits, guinea pigs or chickens, if they aren't kept out of harm's way. Regularly check that your chicken coop or rabbit hutches and runs are secure from foxes, rats and other predators.
- **Bees, wasps and hornets:** These can give pets a nasty sting. This can be dangerous if they're stung several times at once, or stung in the throat while eating one. Check gardens for nests and contact your local pest control if you spot one.
- **Toads:** When threatened, toads give off a poison that can hurt a curious pet's tongue or skin. If this happens, rinse the affected area with plenty of water and phone the vet immediately.
- **Physical objects:** Remove broken bottles, sharp stones and other obvious hazards.
- **Grass seeds:** Check your pet regularly, as grass seeds can pierce a pet's skin or become lodged in ears, eyes or toes.
- **Lawnmowers and strimmers:** Check your garden before using hedge-trimmers, strimmers and lawnmowers. These can injure small pets and wildlife. Tortoises and hedgehogs are particularly vulnerable, as they are easy to miss in long grass and can't escape fast enough. Avoid trimming hedges between 1 March and 31 August when birds could be nesting and raising young.

If your pet comes into contact with any of these hazards, please get in touch with your vet immediately.

Dangers on the beach

Try not to let your dog drink sea water as it can make them sick

Beaches can be amazing places for dogs to exercise and have fun but it's important for owners to be aware of the possible dangers:

- **Temperatures:** It may feel cooler in sea breezes, but temperatures can still soar and cause heatstroke. Make sure your dog has constant access to a cool, shaded area and fresh water. Avoid the hottest parts of the day and be ready to head home if your dog has had enough.
- **Sea swimming:** Not all dogs can swim. Some short legged breeds like corgis find it especially hard and all dogs of any breed will need to learn how to swim. If you don't know whether your dog can swim, testing their swimming abilities in the sea can be very dangerous.
- **Sand:** Eating sand deliberately or accidentally can be incredibly dangerous as it can cause a blockage in a dog's intestines, which requires surgery to remove. Even throwing toys on a beach can cause dogs to accidentally swallow sand.
- **Seawater:** Try not to let your dog drink sea water as it can make them sick. Make sure they have fresh water to drink at all times and rinse them off when you leave the beach or when you get home. This will stop them licking any salt water off their fur and prevent it making their skin sore.
- **Tides:** Always check tide times before you visit the beach to keep your whole family safe.
- **Seaweed:** Seaweed stalks can cause a blockage in your dog's intestine which requires surgery to remove. Dried seaweed causes a problem as it expands when it's eaten.
- **Jellyfish:** Some types of jellyfish can give a nasty sting to people and dogs, so check the water before swimming and don't let dogs investigate washed up jellyfish on the beach.



Water safety and dogs

Splashing around in the water is the perfect way for our hot hounds to cool down in the summer. Swimming is excellent exercise and a great alternative to walking in the summer heat.

- Remember not all dogs like to swim. If yours doesn't, don't force them and never throw a dog into water.
- Be wary of tides at the beach and watch out for the current in rivers.
- Check freshwater lakes, rivers, ponds and canals to make sure they are clean before letting your dog dive in. Some types of algae, including blue green algae are toxic to dogs. If your dog swims in algae-contaminated water, contact your vet immediately.

Whether they're heading down to the beach for a wallow in the waves or just dipping their paws in a pond, make sure you know how to keep your pet safe around water.

- If your dog has inhaled water contact your vet, as they can suffer complications like pneumonia.
- Even dogs who are strong swimmers can get into trouble and unfortunately drown, so it's important they are closely supervised at all times
- Sadly, each year dog owners drown trying to rescue their pets. Please don't risk getting into dangerous situations please call the emergencies services for help.

