

4th of July Safety Tips

4th of July celebrations might be a lot of fun for people, but they can be downright scary for our animals, especially cats, dogs and horses.

The sights, sounds and commotion of Independence Day can confuse animals and make them nervous, which can cause them to run away or place themselves in harmful situations. To help keep your animals from becoming overly stressed this 4th of July, consider the following tips:

- Keep pets indoors and away from crowds so that they feel more protected.
- Consider boarding your animals in a safe place that is farther away from the holiday action. If you plan to travel during this time, boarding your animal might be a better option than leaving it at home.
- Your veterinarian may choose to prescribe a sedative for your animal if it tends to become easily spooked by the fireworks. Remember that your animal must be seen by a veterinarian in order to receive any prescribed medications.
- If you have horses, be sure to keep them indoors and away from the sound of fireworks.
- Early behavior training can desensitize your animal to holiday commotion.

If you have any concerns or questions about helping your animal to make it calmly and safely through the 4th of July holiday, please talk to your veterinarian.

If your dog or cat does become spooked and runs away, check your neighborhood thoroughly as your pet may not go far, and may be hiding close by. You can also check your local humane shelter or animal control agency to see if your pet was brought in. July 5th is usually a very busy day at these agencies.

The 4th of July is also a good time to make sure that your pet is wearing an ID collar and is micro-chipped.

Summer Weather Safety

During the summer months, many of us will be spending more time outdoors with our pets and will be more likely to take our pets along on errands. While interaction with your pet is important for its health and well-being, hot weather does pose risks for our animal friends. Keep your pets cool this summer with these helpful tips.

Never leave your pet unattended in a vehicle during warm days.

Even when outside temperatures are a moderate 70 degrees, a car or truck cab can become a miniature greenhouse. The temperature inside a car can quickly climb to more than 110 degrees. Because dogs don't perspire (they pant to take in cooler air), the distress of a hot car can make them panic, which only aggravates the problem.

Many cases of heatstroke happen when dogs are locked in cars with windows rolled up or cracked slightly. Heatstroke is life-threatening for animals. If not caught in its earliest stages, heatstroke can mean quick death for your pet.

Provide your pet with plenty of clean, cool drinking water

This is very important in order to avoid dehydration. However, do not let your dog drink a lot of water before, during or after exercise because a condition called gastric torsion or bloat may result. A dog, especially a deep-chested breed like the German Shepherd, can die from bloat. Its stomach may swell and even rotate like a wringing towel, which cuts off blood supply through the stomach.

Avoid exercising your pet during the midday summer heat

Exercising your animal is important, but it is better to do so in the early morning or evening hours when the temperatures are lower. If you run with your dog, it is important to gradually build an exercise program that your dog can handle. Dogs can suffer from heatstroke if overworked.

If you notice your animal behaving in a peculiar way and suspect it may be suffering from heatstroke or bloat, contact your veterinarian immediately.

Beware of exercising your dog on hot pavement

Because dogs don't have tennis shoes, they need pad protection. Your dog can get damaged or blistered feet if it doesn't have time to build up its foot pads. Consider running on the roadside or grass.

Protect your pet from sunburn

Just like humans, pets can get sunburn, too. Help your pet avoid a sunburn by avoiding the sun during the brightest part of the day (10 am to 4 pm) or use pet-specific sunscreens which are fragrance free, non-staining, and contain UVA and UVB blockers. Do not use human sunscreens on pets; most are toxic if ingested by dogs or cats. Check the label, as some pet-specific products are not appropriate for use on cats.

Keep fleas in check

As temperatures rise, so does the flea population. *Flea control* is important for several reasons. Flea bites can cause local skin irritation and swelling that may cause your pet discomfort. Some dogs and cats will develop an allergic reaction to flea bites. This intense irritation may result in constant scratching, which lead to hair loss or a bacterial skin infection can know as "hot spots." Fleas are also intermediate hosts for tapeworms and can transmit bacteria, viruses, and protozoa.

Consult your veterinarian for the newest and most effective forms of flea control, such as monthly growth inhibitors and topical insecticides. Read labels before applying as products labeled for dogs only are not safe for cats.

With the proper precautions, you and your pet will enjoy a fun, comfortable, and healthy summer.

Outdoor Hazards

The arrival of warmer weather means more time outside for you and your pets. But even in your own back yard, there are some potential hazards that could get in the way of the fun. Even certain plants and flowers can be poisonous to pets.

Poison Control & Emergency Veterinary Care

It's always a good idea to have on hand the phone numbers for your veterinarian, a local emergency veterinary hospital, and poison control. If you suspect poisoning, call the ASPCA's Poison Control Hotline (1-888-426-4435, fee) or the Pet Poison Helpline (1-800-213-6680, fee) or your veterinarian immediately.

Fertilizers and Herbicides

- Before applying a chemical to your lawn or in your yard, consider whether natural, organic or chemical-free remedies might be just as effective for your intended use.
- Store all fertilizers, herbicides and insecticides in their original packaging and away from pets.
- Be sure to read labels before application; over-application can lead to excess residue.
- Cover or remove outdoor food bowls, water dishes, pet toys and bird baths before any applications of chemicals.
- Do not let your pets in the yard while applying chemicals. Wait until chemicals have dried and even up to four days after application before allowing a pet into the area. Pets that lick their paws after walking on treated areas can be poisoned.

Insecticides and Pesticides

- These products tend to be more toxic to pets than fertilizers and herbicides, so be even more cautious with them.
- Store all insecticides and pesticides in their original packaging and away from pets. The [National Pesticide Information Center](http://www.nationalpesticideinformationcenter.org) (800-858-7378) can help you make informed decisions about pesticide use.
- The most dangerous forms of pesticides include: slug and snail bait (containing metaldehyde), fly bait (containing methomyl), systemic insecticides (containing disyston or disulfoton), mole or gopher bait (containing zinc phosphide), and most forms of rat poisons.
- Store all insecticides and pesticides in their original packaging and away from pets at all times.
- Dogs can be attracted to slug bait that contains metaldehyde. Signs of poisoning include tremors, seizures, shaking, vomiting, hyper-salivation, rapid heart rate, and abdominal pain. If your pet ingests slug bait, contact your veterinarian immediately.

- Natural alternatives to insecticides and pesticides include:
 - **Diatomaceous Earth:** This is made from fossilized remains of one-celled algae. It feels like talcum powder, but scratches and absorbs the wax layer on a bug's surface, leaving it to die from dehydration.
 - **Fermenting Liquid:** Set out shallow containers of yeast, water and spoiled yogurt or beer, and bury the container flush with the soil surface. Slugs love the scent of yeast.

Flea and Tick Control Products

A common cause of pet poisoning in the summer months is improper use or application of flea and tick control products. Use such products responsibly and according to package instructions. Overuse and misuse can be deadly.

- **Never** apply 45-65% permethrin "spot-on" products to cats, even in small amounts. Highly concentrated permethrin can be extremely toxic to cats.
- If you have both dogs and cats in your household, you should be aware that using a permethrin "spot-on" product on a dog may cause illness or death in a household cat.
- **Never** use flea medications intended for a dog on a cat instead. It is important to use only flea and tick products specifically designed for cats, and to administer the proper dosage.
- All flea and tick "spot-on" products—even ones with nearly identical brand names—are **not** alike. Check the label to identify the active ingredient before you apply it.

Poisonous Plants

Ingestion of even small amounts of certain plants (for example, rhododendron or azalea, oleander, lily, or yew) can be harmful or fatal to a pet.

Symptoms of plant poisoning include:

- Irritation to skin and/or mouth
- Diarrhea
- Seizures
- Unconsciousness
- Vomiting (Please note that vomiting is common after cats or dogs ingest plant material. Seek veterinary care especially if vomiting accompanies other symptoms.)

Trip Tips

Travel can be stressful for humans and pets alike. Be sure that your pet is well enough both emotionally and physically to travel.

It may be better for some pets to be left at home in the care of a capable pet-sitter or at a clean, well-run boarding facility while you are away.

If you choose to include your pet in your next vacation, here are some tips to make the trip safer and more enjoyable for the whole family:

General Travel Tips

- Plan ahead to make sure pets are welcome at your destination, whether it is a hotel, motel, park, campground or your friend's or family's home. An Internet search will yield many listings of pet-friendly accommodations.
- Take copies of your pet's current health and rabies certificates.
- Make sure your pet is micro-chipped and wears an identification collar with license and rabies tag. It is a good idea to add a tag with information about where you will be staying at your destination.
- Have your pet examined by your veterinarian to make sure it is healthy enough to travel and that its vaccinations are up to date.
- If you are going camping, talk with your veterinarian about flea and tick medication and heartworm preventatives.
- Don't forget your pet's medications, food (preferably dry), water, toys, and a leash (but do not leave a leash in a carrier with your pet as it may become entangled in it).
- Pack a first aid kit and include the phone numbers of veterinarians, emergency animal hospitals, and the national poison control hotlines: [ASPCA's Poison Control Hotline](http://www.aspca.org/poison-control) (1-888-426-4435, fee) or the [Pet Poison Helpline](http://www.petpoisonhelpline.com) (1-800-213-6680, fee).
- Limit food prior to the start of the trip to avoid travel sickness.
- Try to stick to your pet's routine of feeding, exercise and sleep as much as possible on the trip.
- Perform a daily health check of your pet.

Travel by Car

- Like children, pets should be secured in the back seat.
- For dogs, consider a canine seat belt, a harness that attaches to the existing seat belt in vehicles or to cargo hooks inside larger vehicles and trucks.
- Cats and small dogs should travel in kennel, ideally secured within the car. Never use a cardboard box to transport your pet; it is not secure and is easily damaged.

- If your pet is not used to traveling by car, take it for short rides prior to your trip.
- **Never** leave your pet unattended in a parked car, especially on warm days. The temperature in a parked car can rise to over 120 degrees in a matter of minutes, even when the windows are rolled down. Exposure to such high temperatures can lead to heatstroke, which can kill your pet.
- Plan to stop every few hours to exercise your dog and let it go to the bathroom. Travel kennels for cats should include a small litter box.
- The FDA recently approved a medication to help prevent vomiting associated with motion sickness in dogs. Consult with your veterinarian to see if your dog could benefit.

Travel by Air

- Check with your airline for their specific requirements for pet travel.
- If traveling outside the continental US, check with the embassy or government authority about their requirements for pet travel. Travel outside the continental US may require documentation, vaccinations, and micro-chipping. Travel to Japan requires at least 2 months' lead-time for documentation requirements.
- Book nonstop flights in the cooler morning or evening hours (summer) or the warmer daytime hours (winter).
- Obtain an appropriate travel kennel that allows your pet room to stand up, lie down and turn around. It should have air vents that cannot be impeded.
- Clearly label the kennel with contact information for your home and destination, as well as the words "Live Animal" and an upward arrow on either side of the kennel.
- The FDA recently approved a medication to help prevent vomiting associated with motion sickness in dogs. Consult with your veterinarian to see if your dog could benefit.