

Warm Weather Safety

As spring starts to shine through, the air temperature is on the rise and the summer is just around the corner. The nice weather prompts many people to leave their pets outside during these warmer months. If you are one of these owners, please take into consideration the following criteria in providing the necessary protection for your pets:

- **Shelter** – Every animal, including dogs, cats, and rabbits, is required to have shelter at all times. If you leave your pet outside alone for any amount of time, it must have weatherproof shelter. Even a quick run to the store can result in your pet's safety being compromised. Although it may be warm enough during the day while you are at work, summer storms are unpredictable and can easily cause your pet to be distressed without proper protection. Proper protection from the sun is also required. A shade tree or a tarp should be sufficient, as long as the animal can reach this spot, especially if the animal is confined to a kennel or chained.
- **Water** - All animals must have access to clean, potable water at all times. Whether you attach a large water bottle to your bunny's hutch, put out a bowl for the dog, or attach a Lixit waterer to the outside water nozzle, every pet must have the opportunity to be hydrated. In the case of dogs, it is especially important to anchor the bucket or bowl properly to avoid the animal overturning it. Anchoring buckets in the ground or to a fence is advisable, as is placing a bowl in an old tire and filling in the perimeter with cement. The heavy cement tire/bowl combination is beneficial to those dogs that outwit all other options.
- **Health and Safety Issues** – Warm weather also brings external parasites out of hibernation. Common "bugs" of the season can cause severe health issues if not checked. Many animals are sensitive to fleas and can chew themselves raw, causing severe skin infections. A serious infestation can cause anemia in any animal. Ticks are also a danger to dogs in heavily tree covered areas. Though Lyme disease is easily treated, if left untreated, adverse effects such as kidney disease can and severe lameness can afflict the dog. Many veterinarians offer topical flea and tick preventatives which can alleviate the suffering from these parasites. Mosquitoes also carry the risk of Heartworm transmission in both cats and dogs. A monthly preventative can be obtained from a veterinarian to prevent Heartworm infection, which is nearly always fatal if left untreated. Sadly, many infected animals are never diagnosed. Consider your pet's age, breed (size, coat length, etc.), and physical health when exposing them to the warm and hot weather.

While it is not advisable to maintain any pet outside, it is important to consider the risks of doing so and eliminate as many as possible to assure your pet's health and safety. Animals typically kept as indoor pets can react adversely when allowed outside, even if only for the day. Dogs will sometimes become a neighborhood nuisance, entertaining themselves with escaping endeavors and barking while others will be destructive in the yard and to the wildlife. Other things to consider are maintaining a strict worming and heartworming program, making sure your pet is staying hydrated and not becoming susceptible to heatstroke, and implementing a mentally stimulating playtime so boredom does not become a factor and result in negative behavior. Also, remember that all dogs, cats, and ferrets over four months of age are required by law to have their rabies vaccination and current county license.

Please note that this is just a small list of required guidelines for allowing your pet outside; for a complete list of proper care requirements feel free to contact animal control at 240-487-3570 or email vcooper@collegetparkmd.gov.