



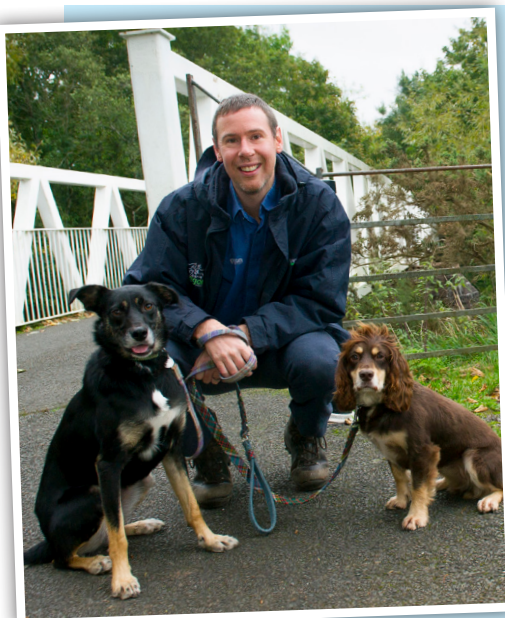
Hot dogs *in the* summer!



Our guide to keeping your pet
safe and healthy in the heat

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Graham Lewis's guide to summer dog care – based on his work as a Paragon vet and caring for his cocker, Clova, and collie, Skye.

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**“
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Heatstroke... a summer killer

When there's hot weather on the horizon, warnings about heatstroke appear in the news. And with good reason, says Graham, because it can be fatal.

"We vets bang on about heatstroke because every year dogs are brought to us that are critically ill," he says. "I've only had one summer in my 18 years as a vet where I've not had a fatality because of heatstroke."

What is heatstroke?

Heatstroke is triggered when a dog gets so hot it can no longer regulate its internal body temperature. The heat causes cell damage in the brain, and left untreated the dog will deteriorate fast. Graham says: "It sounds awful but it effectively cooks the brain. In severe cases, the cell damage means it's very hard for a vet to pull them back. Seizures and fits can follow."

What are the signs?

"You'll see increased breathing and panting," says Graham. "Their eyes can go glassy with a thousand-yard stare. We see heatstroke in the first few days of hot weather because the dogs are not adapting to the rise in temperature. Dogs are good at hiding that they're struggling and owners don't always notice, or intervene quickly enough."

What should you do?

If your dog is struggling, take immediate steps to cool it down. Get the dog into the shade. Then pour cool – but not very cold – water over its body and offer it water to drink. Graham says: "It's fine to turn a hosepipe on them for a short period. Then pick up the phone – a vet or nurse will be able to advise very quickly what to do."

Playing it cool



Heatstroke is the worst-case scenario – but you can avoid it by being aware of the dangers and taking some simple steps. And talking of steps...



Painful paws

The 'paw test' is one of the simplest checks dog owners can make in the heat to stop their pet's pads getting burned.

Graham says: "We see dogs that have been walked in town at the wrong time of day. With all that concrete the heat intensifies.

"A paw test is a good way of measuring whether it's too hot to go out with them.

"It's simple – put the back of your hand on the pavement for seven seconds. If you can't hold it against the surface for that long, it's too hot for the dog."

Throwing shade

During heatwaves, take your dog out first thing or later in the evening when it's cooler. You could take a bowl and water in a flask to give along the way, or go where there's safe access to a stream. Pick a route through woods where it's shaded.

But Graham says: "There will be days my dogs don't get a walk because it's not worth the risk.

"My collie, Skye, will want to go out regardless of how hot it is but I have to be firm and remember that I know best! If a dog needs the toilet, just nip out for five minutes."

Providing cool conditions in the home is another obvious step. Place your dog's bed in a shaded place and ensure they've got access to fresh drinking water.



Mad dogs and Englishmen

Knowing the psychology of your pooch is another good tip, says Graham.

"Dogs are like people," he says. "Some will be sensible in the sun, they go out for a bit, then get too warm and find somewhere cool.

"Others are like the people who like to burn themselves on the beach. They'll stay out all day and they're the ones you have to watch because you'll have to take them away from that situation. So try to find out what dog you've got."



Dogs' dinners



Food can be a great way to keep a dog cool – and happy – when it's hot. Ice is generally safe for dogs if their teeth are healthy, plus they're more likely to lick than chew it.



Kings of KONG

A favourite treat of Graham's dogs Clova and Skye is kibble, mashed into a paste with water, then stuffed into a rubber KONG toy and frozen.

An alternative would be to put food in water in a plastic container, then freeze it.

Graham says: "The dogs spend two or three happy hours in the shade, licking away at a KONG toy stuffed with frozen kibble.

"I also freeze treats in ice cubes – dogs enjoy getting to the treat. If they've got decent teeth it's fine but usually they'll lick their way to the food."

I FREEZE TREATS IN ICE CUBES – DOGS ENJOY GETTING TO THE TREAT

A barbecue beef

Preparing doggie treats is a great idea when you're having a barbecue, so your dog is less likely to beg people for scraps.

Tit-bits of rich barbecue food can cause vomiting and diarrhoea in a dog, which is awful on a hot day. And boned meat and corn on the cob are dangerous.

Graham says: "Chicken bones can cause gut perforations and even blockages.

"Corn on the cob is very dangerous because the core is fibrous. It causes blockages which can need surgery. Corn on the cob stays in a dog's system for a long time, it won't pass through normally. If you are cooking it, make sure you dispose of it where your dog can't get it."



How hot is too hot?

A dog's ability to cope in heat depends on its age, health and breed.

Like humans, very young and old dogs struggle to regulate their body temperature.

Dogs with health conditions are already weakened, while flat-faced breeds, such as French bulldogs, pugs and boxers, struggle because they pant less efficiently.

Any dog can overheat when the thermometer passes 20C and it's exercising hard. And from 25C upwards the dangers really increase.



Nasty by nature

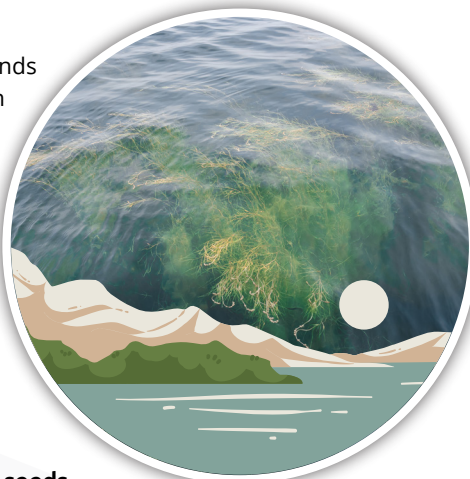
Plants and wildlife hazards intensify in summer, but being aware of the dangers present in water and on land can help you keep your dog safe.

Blue-green algae

Found in slow-moving or stagnant water such as ponds and lakes, cyanobacteria is highly poisonous to both pets and people.

Graham says: "This floating bacteria is present in the Lake District, and while not hugely common we'll see a case of a poisoned dog every couple of years.

"Dogs can ingest it when they're taken for a swim. I tend to let my dogs go into streams instead."



Grass seeds

Some seeds are pointed and sharp enough to pierce a dog's skin. Once inside, they travel inside the body.

"We do see cases of this, and you're a bit unlucky if it happens," says Graham.

"If you find a hole in the skin when you're stroking your dog, that can be worth a trip to the vet because if it's a seed, it can track through the body and cause real damage.

"There's been cases where a seed has pierced the chest and it has come out near the tail."

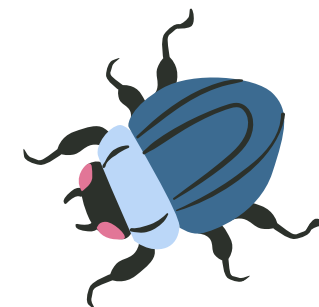
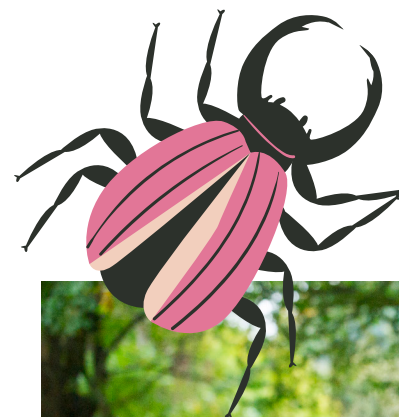


Insect bites and stings

Dogs can suffer allergic reactions or severe swelling from bites and stings, just like humans.

Graham says: "If a dog gets a swollen face, contact a vet just to make sure it's not going to get worse. A sting in a dog's mouth can cause breathing problems. And I've had one dog that went into a shock state due to a bad reaction.

"We generally administer a steroid anti-inflammatory when dogs are brought in."



Ticks

Ticks carry disease and are prevalent in Cumbria. Prevention is better than cure, says Graham.

"If you take your dog to woodland or fells where there's been sheep or deer, give the dog a veterinary-strength tick treatment. That way, if a tick does attach, they drop off before they can cause problems," he says.

Treatments are given in food and are effective for between one and three months.



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Travelling tips

Summer's a time for travel, both at home and abroad. To keep your dog healthy it pays to be like the boy scouts... prepared!

Cooking in the car

Years of warnings about dogs dying inside hot cars have got through to owners. But people still make mistakes.

"We had an owner bring a dog into the surgery and they left their other dog in the car outside," says Graham. "We had to tell them to bring it in, so it's a message we still need to reinforce."

Air conditioning in modern cars means they're far cooler, but when engines and air con is switched off, car interiors heat up fast. Graham once tested how fast for

a social media video – after seven minutes it was a stifling 41.5C, and at 15 minutes it was a lethal 48C.

He says: "It's awful for a dog to be stuck in that. I'd challenge anyone to sit for 15 minutes in a car when it's sunny."



Em-barking on a European trip

Brexit made taking dogs to the EU more difficult as it spelled the end for Britain's Pet Passports. Now, dog owners need an Animal Health Certificate (AHC) every time they cross the Channel.

The documents can run to more than 10 pages and only certain vets can fill them out – so check if yours does. Vets also charge for the service to cover the costs of form filling and carrying out a physical health check.

Importantly, says Graham, you need to plan ahead to ensure your dog has had a rabies vaccination at least 21 days before travel.

The AHC is only valid for EU entry for 10 days after it is issued, your dog must be microchipped, and some countries demand they take a tapeworm treatment. Dogs must also always have a tapeworm treatment before re-entering the UK.

"It's not a simple task taking a dog into Europe, or anywhere else," says Graham. "Get advice from your vet, and do it at least a month in advance."



Foreign bodies

Once abroad, it pays to be aware of animal diseases we don't have in the UK. Dangers include:

Anaplasmosis: A tick-borne disease that can cause fever, lethargy and joint pain. Best to use a tick treatment when away.

Babesia: Another tick-borne nasty that causes fever, jaundice and anaemia. Again, use a tick treatment.

Ehrlichia: Yes, you've guessed it, it comes from a tick bite and can cause fever, weight loss and bleeding.

Leishmaniasis: This one's a parasite typically transmitted through a sandfly bite. It can cause skin lesions, weight loss and organ damage. A vaccine is available, so like all these foreign diseases, check if it's classed as a risk in the region you're travelling to.

The Hot Dogs in Summer safety guide is brought to you by the team at **Paragon Veterinary Group**.

We hope it helps you keep your dog safe and able to make the most of our beautiful home county of Cumbria.



We are a proudly independent veterinary practice with a reputation for excellence, integrity, top-class facilities and a dedication to animals and client care.

We have two centres for pets, in **Dalston** and **Newbiggin near Penrith**, plus a centre for farm animals in **Shap**. We are available 24/7, 365 days a year.

If you require care for your pet, including emergency care, please call us on **01228 710208** or **01768 483789**.



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