

Special Care Needed for Pets in the Summer
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As the summer gets into full swing, the hot weather, fireworks and thunderstorms may all present problems for dogs and cats.

It is very important that animals left outside be provided with shelter to get out of the sun and protection from the wind and rain. The sun shelter could be nothing more than a tarp stretched over part of the yard. Any sun shelter should be well ventilated to prevent excessive heat build up. A hot dog house may be worse than no shelter at all! Your pets also need plenty of fresh water at all times to avoid dehydration.

Be extra careful about leaving your pets in a closed vehicle. The temperature inside a closed vehicle can rise to fatal levels in just a few minutes, even on days that may not seem very hot. Rolling down the windows and making water available may be acceptable on some days, but the safest thing is just not to leave your pet in the vehicle during most summer days, even for short time periods.

The 4th of July brings fireworks and for some dogs and a few cats, strong fears of these loud noises. Don't force your pet to experience these sounds if she seems afraid. Rather than trying to take your dog along to the fireworks display, let her stay in a quiet part of the house, such as the basement, where the sounds are more muted instead. For extremely fearful dogs, you may need the help of your veterinarian for anti-anxiety medication or an animal behaviorist for more permanent behavior modification plans.

Summertime also brings thunderstorms and like fireworks, some animals, especially dogs, are extremely afraid of them. Try to find a place where your dog seems to be less afraid, and let her go there. This may mean leaving her inside rather than outside if you can't be home to let her in when those afternoon storms build up.

Some dogs are afraid no matter where they are, and medication and/or behavior modification may be necessary. Desensitization often works well for many types of noise phobias, but may be difficult to implement correctly without professional help.