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As we near the hottest days of the summer months our pets need more and more assistance in staying cool. On these sweltering days our pets are faced with a variety of problems: sunburn, dehydration, and overheating are just a few. Of all pets, dogs are especially susceptible to the heat. Here are a few tips to help keep your pets cool on these hot days:

1. Keep your pet hydrated. Many dogs, even on the hottest of days, will overexert themselves. Keep an eye on your dog, and watch for rapid breathing or their tongue consistently hanging out – sure signs they’re getting overheated. Make sure your pet is well hydrated, by always keeping water easily accessible for them. And, if you’re a dog walker or pet sitter, keep some extra water for other dog owners who forgot to pack their own. You never know when that extra water could come in handy.
2. Never leave your pet unattended in the car. Another tip that may seem obvious, but is still a large concern within the pet community, is to never leave your pets in the car by themselves – especially on hot days. Most of the time, leaving your pet in the car may seem like an alternative to tying them up outside but, on these hot days, it’s deadly. Dogs are easily dehydrated because of their fur and their higher than average body temperature (usually around 100-105 F). So either keep them at home, or tie them up outside in a cool, shaded and safe location at your destination.
3. Conscientiously exercise your pet. Pet exercise is incredibly integral for the well-being of our pets, but it’s very easy for pets to exercise too much or too hard in the summer. Try to be conscientious about your pet’s needs and take shorter dog walks, or in the early morning or evening when temperatures typically cool down. A great activity for dogs is to take them to a safe body of water, be it a lake, the beach, or a friend’s pool. Make sure that your pet is supervised in the pool because many dogs have a hard time getting out of pools and are at risk of drowning if left alone. Most dogs love playing in the water, and this activity is a great way for dogs to get some exercise without overheating or getting dehydrated. If you don’t have access to a swimming area, consider a kid’s blowup pool for your pet to wade in.
4. Protect your pet from sunburn. Dogs can get sunburned, and preventing that can sometimes be a hassle. Many dogs will lick off their sunscreen if it’s put on their bellies or anywhere else that they can reach it. If you groom your dog, to prevent sunburns make sure you’re not trimming their coat to the point where their skin is overly exposed to the sun. Apply sunscreen, specifically advertised for animals, to the tips of their nose, ears and anywhere else they typically show signs of sunburn.
5. Educate your pet care provider. Many pet owners will be going away this summer and, if any of you travelers are using pet care services to watch your pet while you’re away, make sure they are well versed in the risks of these hot summer months. Be sure to provide your pet sitter or dog walker with any information about your pet’s specific needs or reactions to the heat.

With a little preparation and prevention, you and your pets can beat the heat and enjoy an endless summer filled with fun, sun and lots of playtime.

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