

This Can Kill Your Pet in Minutes, yet It's Easily Avoidable

Make this blunder, and you could regret it for years. It's ridiculously easy to miscalculate the risk and can happen faster than you think. There's also a correlated serious but less deadly risk you're probably also minimizing.

Reviewed by [Dr. Becker](#)

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- One of the biggest dangers of hot days is the chance your pet could overheat and even suffer heatstroke
- Sunburn is a risk for certain pets, especially those with light-colored coats and certainly hairless breeds
- High rise syndrome is a concern for cats who live in tall buildings in the city and risk falling from open windows or fire escapes
- Certain poisons used during warm weather are also a potential hazard, including chemical fertilizers, herbicides, pesticides and rodent bait

Editor's Note: This article is a reprint. It was originally published July 14, 2017.

As eager as most of us are to see our pets playing or snoozing in the sunshine, taking a few precautions can avert disaster and keep everyone safe and healthy during warm days.

Overheating/Heatstroke

Many people don't realize just how quickly their pet can overheat. Dogs and cats can't regulate their body temperature as efficiently as we can, because most of their sweat glands are confined to the pads of their feet. Panting is your pet's primary means of cooling down. Flat-faced (brachycephalic) pets can't pant as effectively as breeds with longer noses, so they have even less ability to regulate their body temperature.

Pets can also become dehydrated very rapidly in warm weather, so it's extremely important to insure your dog or cat has a constant source of fresh, clean drinking water. If he'll be outside in the heat for any period, he should also have access to a completely shaded area and plenty of cool drinking water, and be sure to bring him indoors when the temp climbs to 90 F (32 C) or above.

If you spend time in the yard, and your dog (or adventurous kitty) doesn't like being stuck indoors, you can turn on the hose or sprinkler to cool him off. You can also fill a children's small plastic wading pool with water and encourage him to sit or lie in it.

Exercise your dog either in the early morning or evening when the temperature is coolest. Try to stay in the shade during daylight hours, and no matter the time of day, don't overdo outdoor exercise or play sessions. Even on an overcast day or in the evening, a long period of physical exertion in hot weather can cause heatstroke.

Don't allow your dog or cat to stand, walk or rest on hot outdoor surfaces like sidewalks or parking lots. His paws, belly and hindquarters can sustain burns from hot concrete. And remember, your pet is close to the ground and the ground is much hotter than the air. Just walking on hot pavement can cause him to overheat.

Never under any circumstances leave your pet in a parked vehicle on a hot day. Your car or truck cab can become a furnace very quickly, even with the windows open, and can cause a fatal case of heatstroke in your cherished pet. Aside from the risk of serious illness or death, leaving pets unattended in vehicles in hot weather is illegal in many states.

Sunburn

Sunburns are primarily a concern for dogs, since most cats don't willingly spend time in direct sunlight in the heat of the day. It's not always safe to assume that just because your dog wears a fur coat she's protected from skin cancer.

Dogs who shouldn't overdo it include those with:

- White coats
- Short coats
- No coat (hairless)
- Dogs with pink or light-colored noses
- Dedicated sun worshippers (especially if they lay on their backs)

You can protect your dog from the sun's harmful rays with a nontoxic, dog-safe sunscreen. Use a product designed to not only help protect your pet from potentially harmful rays, but also to nourish and moisturize the skin. Look for a product that contains no dangerous chemical ingredients, parabens, artificial fragrances, nanoparticles or mineral oil. It should also be non-comedogenic (doesn't irritate or clog pores), and developed using no animal testing or cruelty.

Choose natural sunscreens that contain only zinc oxide for active UVA and UVB ray protection. Unlike some chemical sunscreens that may absorb ultraviolet light, zinc oxide helps reflect and scatter away both UVA and UVB rays from your pet's body. Zinc oxide is found naturally in the earth's crust and is a safe ingredient to help prevent excessive sun exposure.

When you put sunscreen on your dog, be sure to avoid the eyes but definitely get the area around her face and ears covered, as well as her tummy if she likes to sunbathe belly-up. If she'll be outside for an extended period, reapply the sunscreen about every two hours.

High Rise Syndrome

High rise syndrome is primarily a problem for city kitties, so if you and Tiger live in suburbia or in a rural area, you've probably never heard of it. But believe it or not, during the warmer months of the year, city dwelling cats fairly regularly fall from open windows and fire escapes, often requiring a trip to an emergency veterinary clinic.

Pet parents who live in high rises and other tall buildings often allow their cats to sun themselves in open windows and on fire escapes, unaware that kitty's prey drive may lead him to pounce on moving birds or insects, only to become airborne. Needless to say, these falls are often very serious, resulting in shattered jaws, punctured lungs, broken limbs and worse. Here are a few facts to explain why some presumably highly intelligent cats suffer high rise syndrome, and what can happen as a result:

- When a cat falls from a high perch it's unintentional, not deliberate. Cats are smart. They don't leap from high places because they know it's dangerous.
- The reason cats fall is usually because they are intensely focused on something outside, perhaps a bird, and either lose their balance or their prey instinct sends them out the window before they realize what they're doing. Another cause of falls is normal muscle twitching and other movement during deep sleep. A kitty can roll off a windowsill while changing sleep positions.
- While cats won't intentionally jump from a high perch, they also don't realize they can't dig their claws into brick, concrete or steel surfaces to help prevent a fall if they lose their balance.
- When a cat falls from a high perch, he doesn't land squarely on all fours. He lands with his feet slightly apart, which is how serious head and pelvic injuries occur. And falling shorter distances can actually be more dangerous, because kitty doesn't have enough time to adjust his body to land correctly.
- Even if your cat survives a fall in relatively good condition, she'll land in an unfamiliar, frightening place on a sidewalk or street and can easily run away before you can get to her.

Outdoor Poisons

Many commonly used fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides are loaded with chemicals that can prove toxic to pets. The same goes for **rodent bait**. Don't allow your dog or cat access to areas of your garden, lawn, house or outbuildings where chemicals have been used. Take the same precautions when walking your dog. Store all chemicals out of reach of your pet, and remember to keep citronella candles, oil products and insect coils out of your pet's reach as well.

If you'll be doing any planting to brighten up your home or yard, before you stock up on seeds or visit your local nursery, make sure you know which plants, flowers and greenery are toxic to your pet if ingested. Call your veterinarian or the **ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center** at (888) 426-4435 immediately if you suspect your dog or cat has swallowed a poisonous substance.

Sources and References

[VetStreet June 9, 2015](#)
