



Paw Prints

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Columnist

Spring-proof your dog

Spring has sprung, and summer is just around the corner and with the change of seasons comes outdoor chores, spring cleaning — and the arrival of pests. Before you embark on your seasonal chores, take inventory of potential hazards for your furry friend.

Dogs love spring because they get to spend more time outdoors. After being cooped up during the long Sisters winter, your pooch will be eager to get outside and start exploring! It's therapeutic for Rover to be able to take advantage of the lengthening and warming days to release all their pent-up winter energy.

However, the warmer days bring certain health concerns, so take a moment and make sure your pooch is

fully prepared for the pleasant weather.

Spring is a good time to check and make sure your dog's vaccinations are up-to-date. Dog-to-dog contact increases in the spring and continues into the summer months. Dogs are spending more time in the park and with each other and are likely to come across some new puppy, raccoon, or squirrel. Keeping their rabies, parvo and distemper up-to-date will help protect your pooch from potentially deadly diseases. Many veterinary clinics start to see increased incidence of kennel cough in the spring.

If you've noticed that Rover has been scratching lately, fleas are the likely culprit.

The outdoors is what Central Oregon is known for and many folks enjoy taking their furry companions along. Hiking on trails usually means wooded areas along with the possibility of ticks. So, remember to use flea and tick prevention this spring before stepping on that wooded path with Rover. If you're proactive with flea and tick control, you won't have to worry as much about these pests getting your furry friend sick.

There's a variety of products available to combat these pests, so ask your veterinarian which one is best for your dog. Start early as preventing ticks and fleas from becoming a problem is far easier than dealing with a major flea infestation. Get into the habit of regularly checking your dog for ticks. Ticks are typically found around the head, on the ears, neck, chest and forelegs although they can be found anywhere. Usually it is easier to find them by feeling for them instead of looking, depending on how long your dog's coat is.

One way to check for fleas is to look for black specks on your furry friend or in his bed. The specks are fecal matter from adult fleas, and if you add the specks to a wet paper towel the particles will turn red.

With spring generally comes spring cleaning. When using harsh cleaning chemicals around your home, keep your pets out of harm's way. Almost all cleaning products contain chemicals that are harmful to animals. So if it's a nice day, open windows while cleaning to air out chemicals.

With gardening in full swing during the spring, pay special attention to poisonous



PHOTO BY JODI SCHNEIDER MCNAMEE

Mia — pest-free for spring and ready to explore.

plants that are accessible to your pets. Popular outdoor plants that are poisonous to pets include rhododendron, sago palm, and azalea, to name a few. For a complete list of plants that are poisonous to your furry friends, go to ASPCA.org.

Pet parents, take care — fertilizers, insecticides and herbicides keep your lawns healthy and green, but their ingredients may be dangerous if pets ingest them. Dogs also absorb toxic chemicals through the pads of their paws, so use a nontoxic fertilizer.

Keep your dog safe outdoors by making sure your fertilizer is pet-friendly. You

don't have to neglect your lawn to protect Rover, but you do have to be selective about the ingredients in your fertilizer products.

Warmer weather means more trips to the park, longer walks and more chances for your dog to run off after seeing a squirrel zoom by. Make sure Rover has a microchip for identification and wears a tag imprinted with your home address, cell phone and any other important contact information.

Spring really means fun times for dogs and their people, so pick up the leash and go for a walk. You are bound to notice a little spring in your furry friend's steps!

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