

Creature Comforts: Summer Heat

By Michal Smith

Summer heat is here and keeping animals cool is of dire importance.

Keeping dogs and cats indoors is often the best idea during soaring temperatures outdoors. Provide plenty of cool water during the day and limit activity time to the cool mornings or evenings.

We can't forget about our backyard pets. Chickens and rabbits can also deteriorate in the heat; rabbits are especially prone to heat stress and can easily die of heatstroke if warning signs are not caught early.

A rabbit's optimal air temperature is between 50°F and 70°F. Rabbits with thick or long coats of hair, overweight, and young or old are at an even greater risk for heatstroke. It's important to check your rabbits consistently to insure they're comfortable and don't overheat.

The signs and symptoms that will help you recognize that your rabbit has, or is beginning to get stressed from the heat or even get heatstroke are: the rabbit is fully stretched out with feet sprawled apart and tail is limp; wetness around the nose area; eyes are half closed and/or has a sleepy or dazed appearance; the rabbit's tongue is hanging out; breathing is rapid, labored or has shallow breathing; the rabbit is reluctant to move; the rabbit refuses to eat or

drink; has hot ears.

To avoid this, provide plenty of ventilation during the day by placing a damp towel over the front of a fan facing the hutch or cage. The air circulation will also cut the ammonia smell down. Keep them in the shade; provide clean cool water. If their water is hot, it not only causes them to drink less, but also keeps them from cooling down when needed. You may need to change their water 3 or 4 times a day during the hot days. Make sure there is enough space for them to stretch out to get cool. Place cool items in the cage for the rabbit to lay on or against like a ceramic tile placed in a fridge for an hour prior; liter bottles with frozen water inside for them to lay against; wet carpet tiles or water

soaked bricks. Feed in early morning or late in evening. Leave them alone during hottest part of day.

If you discover your rabbit is over heated there are a few things you can do to help, if caught in time: wet rabbit's ears with a cool wet towel; place cold packs against the body moving around slowly but do not leave in one place; if they're alert, water given orally is important; as a last resort, dip your rabbit into cool water, taking care to keep head and ears above the water. Most rabbits will not like this, and though it is effective,

it will likely cause undue stress for your rabbit.

Much like rabbits, chickens can perish due to extreme heat and should have the same type of air circulation and cool water access to stave off stress.

EO Tip: for pet sunburn, add Lavender and Helichrysum to pure aloe vera and purified water for head, face and muzzle relief and healing. Learn more at the store! Open Mon-Fri 10:00-6:00p.m.; Sat 10:00-5:00p.m.; Sun Noon-4; 503-429-PETS(7387).

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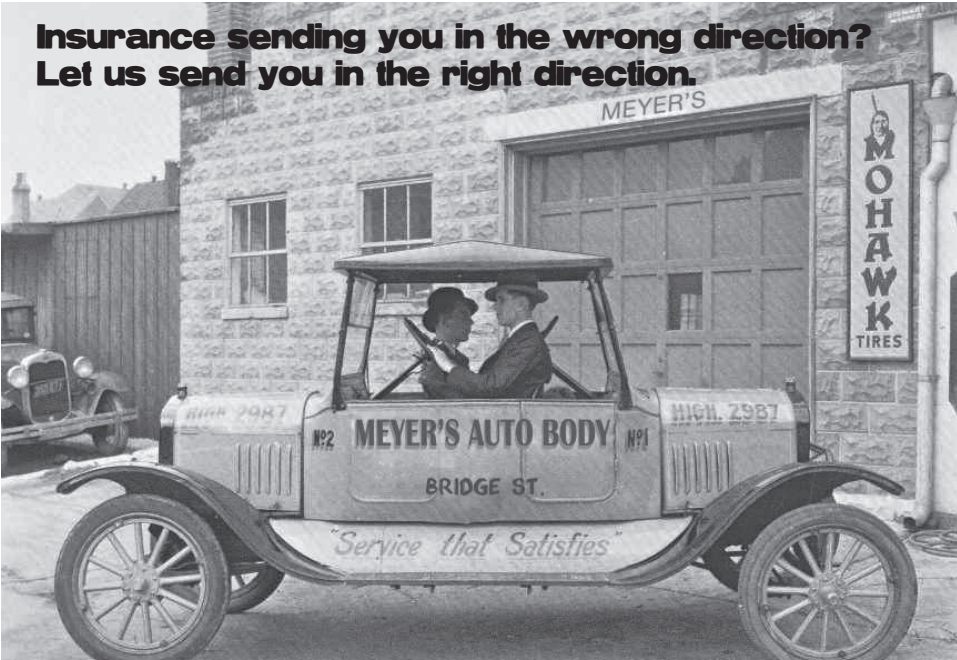
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