

Hot Pets

ANIMALS NEED TO KEEP COOL, TOO by Camilla Mortensen

It happens every summer. Someone makes a quick trip to the mall and leaves her dog in the car “just for a couple minutes.” But the lines get long, the minutes drag on and before long that car sitting in the sun has gotten unbearably hot. A Stanford University study shows that on a 72-degree day a car can heat up to 116 degrees in only an hour. Every summer dogs and even cats get heatstroke, and some die.

The rest of the country has been hit with blazing temperatures while Oregon has remained relatively cool, but it only takes one hot afternoon to hurt your pet. “I’m positive dogs in this community have died in this community from being left in a hot car,” Kelly Darnell, interim Animal Services Program manager for Eugene, says.

Dogs are more sensitive to heat than people realize, and flat-faced animals such as pugs, as well as older or overweight dogs, are extra-sensitive to high temps.

Even animals that live outside need to stay cool. On hot days many zoos freeze treats or big blocks of water for animals to lick. Birders recommend leaving a puddle of water in your yard as a birdbath so wild birds can stop by and cool off on hot, dry days. If you see a bird standing with its legs far from its body and its wings spread, it’s usually trying to cool off. Horses, sheep, pet goats and other livestock need shade and access to water as well.

Darnell says even with the brief heat spells we’ve had the city has already had calls about hot animals. So what do you do if you see a dog in car and you think it’s too hot? “It’s hard to know — you’re at a shopping mall and see a hot pet, who do you call?” Darnell says.

Who you call depends on where that mall is. Eugene, Springfield and Lane County have their own numbers. Darnell says in the city of Eugene calling the animal services number, 687-4060, will send your call to the 911 dispatch center.

Eugene will either send an animal welfare officer, or if there is none available, an actual police officer will come, Darnell says, adding, “We take these hot dogs calls really seriously.” The animal officers have special laser thermometers that tell how hot the inside of the car is, she says.

If the car is too hot, the officer will get the dog out, get it into the shade and give it water, and if the owner can’t be found, take it to the 1st Avenue Animal Shelter. A notice is left for the owner.

Dogs, cats and other pets can also get too hot exercising in the heat of the day, or even being left outside in a hot yard. Darnell says to keep an eye out for excessive panting, increased heart rate and respiration, drooling, weakness, vomiting and collapsing. She recommends making sure your pet has access to water and shade at all times on hot days and if it’s really hot, bring pets inside to where there’s a fan or air conditioning.

Darnell says the city will be doing outreach and putting up flyers at Walmart, Valley River Center and other big department stores to remind people that heat hurts dogs, too. **EW**



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