



NELSON COUNTY ANIMAL CONTROL

Taking Care of Animals in Summer Weather

Pets, Hot Weather, & Hot Cars

Nelson County Animal Control responds to numerous reports of pets locked in hot cars from spring to fall and dozens of reports for pets without adequate shelter. Not only is it illegal to fail to provide adequate shelter from the element, hot weather also can quickly turn into a deadly situation.

Precautions

In hot weather, pet owners are urged to take these precautions:

- Never leave pets in a parked car. Even on cool days, such as 70 degrees, a car's internal temperature will jump to 90 degrees in 10 minutes and over 110 degrees within an hour. At 85 degrees, the car will reach 102 degrees in 10 minutes, continuing higher with more time. On 90 degree days, the car will quickly escalate to over 110 degrees. Cracking windows does not prevent a car from getting dangerously hot, even in cool temperatures.
- Always provide shade and water. Virginia law requires pet owners to provide adequate shelter to protect pets from "injury, rain, sleet, snow, hail, direct sunlight, the adverse effects of heat or cold, physical suffering, and impairment of health." Under this law, a hot car or even a dog house without shade is not enough protection from the sun. Tree shade and tarps are ideal because they do not impede airflow.
- Exercise during the coolest portions of the day. Pet owners should avoid exercising their pets on hot days or Code Red Weather (poor air quality) days. If activity is unavoidable, owners should attempt to limit their pet's activities, take frequent breaks to cool down and rehydrate, and watch for shortness of breath.
- Avoid asphalt in the summer. Hot asphalt can burn paws. Owners should walk their pet on grass or dirt trails, whenever possible.
- Remember every pet is different. Like people, heat impacts individual pets differently. Pets are most at risk for heat stroke when they are very old, very young, overweight, or if they have heart or respiratory disease. Breeds with short muzzles (like boxers, pugs, bulldogs, shihtzus, and other short muzzled dogs or cats) have a much harder time breathing and cooling off in hot weather.

When To Contact Your Veterinarian

Contact your veterinarian immediately if your pet shows any of the following signs:

- Heavy panting
- Glazed eyes
- Rapid pulse
- Vomiting
- Fever (the normal range in dogs is 101-102 degrees, cats is 99.5-102.5 degrees)
- Unsteadiness or a staggering gait
- A deep red or purple tongue

Owners Suspecting Their Pet Is Suffering From High Heat Should:

- Immediately take the pet to a veterinarian
- If you notice your pet is overheating, take these steps to gradually reduce the pet's body temperature:
 - Use ice packs, cold towels, or apply cool (not cold) water to the head, neck and chest
 - Let your pet drink small amounts of cool water or lick ice cubes
 - Move the pet into shade or air-conditioning

Never try to quickly cool a pet by dunking them in cold water. This can drop their body temperature too quickly and send them into shock

Pets Left Unattended

Persons seeing pets left unattended in hot cars or with inadequate shelter should immediately:

1. Record the make, model, color, license plate number, and location of the vehicle (or address when reporting a pet without adequate shelter)
2. Call Nelson County Animal Control (434) 263-7047 or the Nelson County Sheriff's Office (434) 263-7050
3. For pets in hot cars, report this information to the store / mall manager and ask the owner of the pet be paged
4. If possible, stay until an Animal Control Officer arrives to help them locate the pet quickly