

While the official first day of summer is a couple of weeks away, now doubt our Alabama heat has already arrived. There is no better time than right now to make sure your pets are prepared for the impending non-stop heat. Pet owners need to remember that our dogs and cats don't sweat like we do so have to pant to try and control their body temperature. But panting can only cool them down so much so planning is in order if you are going to undertake activities with your pet in our hot weather.

Just like us our pets need unlimited clean, cool water. Make sure your pets have plenty of fresh water and that it is located in a shaded area to help it stay as cool as possible. Many dogs will benefit from having a children's plastic wading pool full of nice cool water that they can get into if it gets too hot and those are readily available at local stores for a very small price. And box fans are also cheap and can help your pet as well – think of how much better you feel in front of a fan on a hot day.

If you have outside dogs with dog houses, those houses must be under adequate shade else wise they will turn into mini-ovens unsuitable for protecting your dog from the elements. And if you think an unshaded dog house is adequate shelter for your pet, just crawl in one as the temps hit the 80's-90's and see for yourself how 'comfy' it is. Better yet, stick a thermometer inside and you will see why your dog avoids it like a fire ant bed. Of course, our wish is for dogs and cats to join in the fun inside your home so they can enjoy the air conditioning or fans with their human family.

If you like taking your pet with you in your vehicle and the outside temperature is probably above about 70 degrees, then you MUST think ahead in regards to your itinerary BEFORE leaving the house. This time of year it is generally better to leave your pet at home than take any chance on it having to stay in your car for any length of time no matter how quick you think your stop will be. If you do have your pet with you in hot weather, please make sure that you will not be stopping anywhere where your pet must stay in the car for more than literally 2-3 minutes as Alabama heat can seriously injure or kill a pet (or child) left in a parked car very quickly. We encourage citizens to call your local police and report any pets in parked cars during hot weather so they can take appropriate actions. And if you leave your vehicle running with the air-conditioning on for your pet, still make sure that you don't do that for too long as mechanical failures could occur so that the A/C is no longer cooling and the results could be devastating.

For those that travel with their dog in the back of a pickup truck, how about putting your hand on the truck bed on a 90+ degree day and you will feel that it is much too hot to be safe for your dog and can cause bad burns to the pads of your dog's feet. Put your dog in the cab of the truck with you so it too can enjoy the air conditioning and your company.

Before shaving a long-coated dog thinking it will help them, please talk to your Veterinarian as dogs can get sunburned and overheat faster because they have no protection from the sun. For those with 'short-nosed' dogs like Bulldogs, Pugs, Boston Terriers and more, please just keep them in air-conditioning as many of these breeds simply cannot handle the heat and will suffer heatstroke or death if left out in the high heat, even if they have shade.

Our pets are not super beings able to withstand conditions that we don't like ourselves. If you are miserable in the heat, your pet is too so please plan accordingly to keep your pet safe and happy throughout our long Alabama summer.