



PRESS RELEASE

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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Summertime Concerns for Dog Owners

By the Vermont Veterinary Medical Association
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Summer's almost here and festivals, craft fairs, and other outdoor events are popping up everywhere. Many dog owners want to bring their beloved pets along to these events, but it might be a better choice to leave them at home. While owners are enjoying the attractions, the dogs are being jostled, stepped on, and many are eating dropped people food and trash when their owners are not looking. If it's really hot outside, imagine how hot the pavement is for your dog, whose feet can be burned. For these reasons many organizers prohibit dogs from the event. This often leads to another problem: dogs being left in hot cars.

Sadly, every year, veterinarians see cases of dogs who suffer heat stroke (some die) after being left in parked cars. Justifications include, "I'll just be a few minutes in the store" or "I cracked the windows", *but it is NEVER just a few minutes and cracking the windows doesn't help*. The temperature inside your vehicle can rise rapidly and put your dog at serious risk of heat stroke and even death. In 20 minutes, the temperature can exceed 125 degrees.

This is such a serious concern that Vermont has passed a 'Good Samaritan' law, which offers legal protection to citizens and law enforcement who are forced to shatter windows of cars to rescue distressed pets. The law requires concerned citizens to call 911, fire or police departments before breaking into a car. They must check that all the doors are locked, must use no more force than necessary to enter the vehicle, must stay with the dog until emergency personnel arrive, and must leave a note on the vehicle about what happened. The pet owner can also be charged with animal cruelty. Sounds harsh? Imagine wearing a fur coat like your dog while sitting in a car on a hot sunny day and being unable to open the door to cool it down. It IS cruel.

So, it may be best for your pets if you leave them at home where they'll be safe. If you're leaving them outside in a fenced yard, make sure they have shade and fresh water. (Some owners put ice cubes in the water bowl.) If you insist on bringing your pet to the event, contact organizers in advance to make sure they are allowed. Bring a water bowl and some cool water for your dog and keep it on a short (no more than 4') leash. Remember that the best thing for your dog may be 'love 'em AND leave 'em'. At home.

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The Vermont Veterinary Medical Association (VVMA), founded in 1898, is a professional organization of 380 veterinarians dedicated to compassionate animal care and quality medicine.