

'Dog days' mean trouble for neglected hot pets

By MAURIE WALKER

The dog days of summer have one meaning for people and another for the dogs themselves.

The hot, humid weather may bother many humans, but in most instances they can find a cool haven in an air-conditioned home or office or refresh themselves with a cold drink.

But what about the family pets? They are often victims of the heat and helpless to do anything about it. How many times have you heard of a dog or cat being shut up in a hot garage while the owners are away?

How about the dog that is tied to a tree, a shady spot earlier in the day, but sun drenched by late afternoon?



Then there is the person who probably meant to be kind by taking a pet for a ride in the car, and leaves the animal inside the vehicle with windows open just a crack or not at all.

Kathy Krause, director-manager of the Mid-Humane Society's animal shelter in Washington, D.C., there are several "do's" and "don't's" that should be observed to help animals through the summer.

"Water, plenty of fresh, cold water is important. A person should check the pet's supply of water at least twice a day during the hot weather," she said.

"Filling a pail with water and leaving

it all day is not the answer. The water will get warm and may end up with bugs in it. Dropping a few ice cubes in the water is a good idea. Dogs like ice cubes and it will help keep the water fresher and cool."

SHE SAID if a pet is kept outdoors during the day, there should be some shade available.

"If a dog is tied up, be certain it can get into a shady spot, no matter what time of day," she added.

If a dog or cat is taken in the family car, there should be adequate air.

"On a hot summer day, the air inside of a car heats up quickly. On an 85 degree day, temperatures inside a car, with windows slightly open, will reach 100 degrees in 10 minutes. In 30 minutes it will go up to 120 degrees. On warmer days it will go even higher."

Dr. Lynda Scales, veterinarian at the animal shelter, said a pet's normal temperature is 101.5 to 102.2 degrees Fahrenheit.

"A pet can withstand a body temperature of 107-108 degrees Fahrenheit for only a very short time before suffering irreparable brain damage or even death," Dr. Scales said.

"The overheated air in a closed car interferes with the pet's normal cooling process, that is, evaporation through panting."

"Walking a dog, do it in the morning or evening when the temperature is cooler," advises Ms. Krause.

"Pavement gets hot during the day which is hard on a dog's feet. If a person has to walk the dog in the afternoon, they should be careful of the hot sidewalks or pavement," she said.

Since pets are normally not as active in the summer, their food intake can be reduced, Ms. Krause added.

It is very important to brush a dog two or three times a week, Ms. Krause advised.

This excess hair just makes the animal sweat more. However, the hair does act as an insulation for the animal so they shouldn't be shaved."

Some tips on taking a pet on a vacation trip were also offered.

"Be certain the animal has all its

necessary shots. Take the rabies shot certificate with you.

Up-to-date identification is important so the pet get lost. But before you travel, if you are going to stay in a motel, check to see if they allow pets.

It's a good idea to be certain your pet is a good traveler, doesn't get car sick.

A dog should be let out of the car every two hours, allowed to walk and be given fresh water.

A pet is to be left at home, Ms. Krause advises, the owner should check

before leaving it at a pet boarding place.

"Be sure you choose a reputable kennel and if you leave the pet at home, don't shut it in an unventilated garage. Never leave a pet in a garage with no windows. A fan placed out of reach of the animal could be used to circulate the air, assuming the garage has windows.

"If leaving a person in charge of your pet, pick someone who is responsible. Don't leave the care to some youngster who is too young."

Whenever you take a dog in the car, never let them stick their head out of the window.

What do you do if your suspect your dog has had a heat stroke?

"Always have a rectal thermometer in the house. If you think your dog has had a heat stroke, take its temperature. The normal body temperature of a dog

is between 101.5 and 102.2.

"If your pet is overcome by heat exhaustion, put it in cold water immediately. Rub it with ice cubes and keep the animal cool. Don't try to take care of the animal yourself, get it to a veterinarian."

The doctor said a high temperature could also mean an infection so immediate attention is important.

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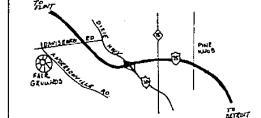
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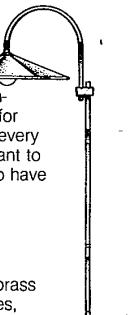
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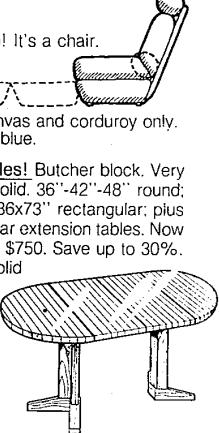
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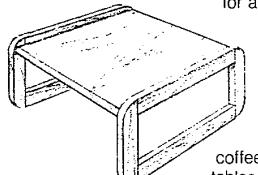
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