

Hot days and your dog

Summer is upon us and the weather is really heating up. Many of us go to work in air conditioned offices or may even work in the heat outdoors. Our dogs often have limited choices when we are at work. They swelter in the heat until we come home. So what can we do to make our dogs lives more pleasant during those hot summer days?

1. Keep brushing (or bathing) out those winter coats – the less winter coat, the cooler the dogs will be.
2. Provide several areas of shade for your dog in the yard. As the sun moves over your yard throughout the day, shade will come and go. Ensure your dog always has shaded areas regardless of where the sun is. Trees, buildings and pergolas all provide shade so check next time you are home to make sure that there is shade in your yard at all times of day.
3. Provide multiple water sources. An exposed water bowl is quickly heated by the sun or your dog may knock it over or drink it all. Provide at least 2-3 bowls or water sources. Check your local pet supplies store – some bowls have compartments in the rim where you can freeze water so the contents of the bowl stay cooler longer.
4. Freeze water overnight and place the large frozen blocks into the water bowl to keep water cooler for longer.
5. Make flavoured ice blocks for enrichment and to keep your dog cool – try tuna, gravy, pet milk or meat stock ice blocks
6. Provide a wading pool in a shaded area. Plastic pools are best as they are more durable.
7. If you keep your dog indoors when you are out, ensure that the house is air conditioned, make sure roller shutters or curtains are closed, keep doors and windows closed to keep cool air in and hot air out. Insulate your roof!
8. Make changes to your dogs diet. In summer, energy needs are less so decrease the diet and do the “rib test” to check your dog’s body condition. If your dog is at correct weight, you should be able to feel all ribs clearly with only a thin covering of fat. Can’t feel the ribs clearly? Now is the time to put your dog on a diet, as reducing body fat will help to keep your dog cooler.
9. Be smart about exercise – only walk your dog early morning or in the evening when the temperatures are lower. Take water on your walks for your dog to drink.
10. Don’t walk in full sun or on the bitumen road as your dog will quickly overheat. While you have shoes to absorb the heat, your dog’s pads will absorb the heat from the road leading to rapid overheating. Walk on cool grass instead.
11. Take your dog swimming at your designated local off leash beach, dam or river. If they don’t like to swim, allow them to wade in as far they feel comfortable. Don’t force them to swim, instead allow them to discover how cool the water is in their own time.
12. Car travel – **never ever** leave your dog unattended in a vehicle even with the windows down. Cars heat up to deathly temperatures in 1-5 minutes. It is better to leave your dog at home than to take them for a drive to the shops on a warm or hot day.

