

Keeping dogs safe around water

By Elizabeth Maimon

A favorite summer pastime for many of us is relaxing by a pool or a lake while unwinding from the day or – better yet – even spending the whole day poolside blissfully relaxed. If your dog is in tow, however, it is essential to stay alert.

Contrary to popular belief, not all dogs enjoy swimming or can swim particularly well. If it seems like your dog does not want to swim, it is important not to force him. If your dog falls in and appears to be struggling, offer a net or an object to help rescue him. Jumping in after him is seldom a good idea. In fact, a safety vest such the canine flotation device, is designed to keep your pet afloat in the water. These vests are adjustable and designed to fit around your pet's chest. Having a ramp installed in the pool or around the dock may also help your pet exit the water without struggling.



If your furry family member is an avid swimmer who enjoys a refreshing dip, it is important for you and your children to swim at a safe distance to avoid getting scratched or pulled under while swimming. Children who swim alongside one's dog should always wear a life jacket.

Watch for water-related problems such as ear infections, a dull, dry coat and signs of dehydration. Dehydration can occur quickly – an easy way to check that your dog is not dehydrated is to lift your dog's lips and look for bright pink and moist gums.

Outdoor exposure to water can change your dog's vaccination needs. Know your dog's travel history, disease exposure, age,

breed and health status to tailor a vaccination protocol. Pets can contract several contagious water-borne illnesses and intestinal parasites such as Giardia from exposure to outdoor untreated water. For example, leptospirosis, a highly contagious water-borne illness, is preventable through annual inoculations.

Leptospirosis is especially dangerous because of its zoonotic (spreadable from animal to human) potential to people. Animals and people can experience a high fever, liver and kidney diseases, and vomiting and diarrhea.

Also, excessive ingestion of heavily chlorinated pool water, saltwater or stagnant lake water can result in vomiting and diarrhea. You might consider bringing plenty of fresh filtered or bottled water to the pool or lake to avoid intentional ingestion of these and other potentially harmful agents.

Be sure always to have plenty of fresh water available at all times to all pets in the home, year-round. Provide plenty of shade and a cool, dry shelter from the heat and the elements. To avoid burned footpads and heat exhaustion, exercise your pets during the early morning and at dusk when the pavement is cooler and heatstroke is less likely.

When in doubt about future outdoor activity and travel, contact your local veterinary team for additional health, safety and travel tips.

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