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Ask the Animal Behaviorist

Help your pet have a healthy and safe spring and summer

Courtesy of the Humane Society Silicon Valley

Special to the Times

Most people look forward to the spring and summer with great anticipation. The outlook for our pets can be just as promising with a little forethought. Although the spring and summer months offer the potential of fun, you need to be aware of a few trouble spots.

Warm temperatures:

Your pet is covered by a coat of fur. This helps to insulate them in the winter and to some extent, helps keep them cool in the summer. However, your pet needs some additional things to stay cool and comfortable every year. One is plenty of shade. Either provide a covered porch or patio, a nice shady tree or let your pet remain indoors during the hot hours. Two, they need plenty of fresh, cool water available at all times. If the day is excessively hot, try filling a child's wading pool with water so your pet will have plenty to drink or can wade to cool down. If kept indoors, leave a floor fan turned on so your pet may recline in front of it to remain cool.

Feeding:

Both adult dogs and cats should have two feedings per day. High quality dry kibble that is purchased from your local pet store is more nutritious than grocery store brands. If you have a young animal, 5 months or younger, they should have at least three feedings a day. With extremely young animals, ages 6 to 12 weeks, they should have four meals a day. Fresh, cool water should be available at all times for your pet unless you are following a strict house training program with your young puppy.

Bathing/brushing:

Both dogs and cats can greatly benefit from a good daily or weekly brushing along with a monthly bath for dogs. Bathing and brushing helps get rid of the dead hair, helps rid the skin of bacteria, helps with flea control, makes your pet smell better and just makes your pet feel good! Brushing also helps distribute oils in the skin, which keeps the coat healthy, and brushing helps avoid mats in the hair. A coat that is dirty and matted does not help insulate your pet to keep them cool. If you are going to bath your pet, use a shampoo that is designed just for your pet. Human shampoo is too harsh for pets and will cause skin irritation. If you are having trouble brushing or bathing your pet, try feeding your pet some very special treats as you gently work with their coat.

Fleas and ticks:

Spring and summer are the worst time of year for both of these parasites. Severe flea infestations can result in physical injury and even death in young animals. Several new topical treatments that you can apply monthly can completely free your pet of these pests. Consult your vet about Advantage (kills and repels just fleas for up to one month with just one application) and Frontline (kills fleas and ticks for one month per application). It is important to clean your pet's bedding on a weekly or bi-weekly basis to help keep these pests under control. Ticks are a bit larger and slower than fleas but just as annoying and carry diseases as well. Check your animals thoroughly and consistently for ticks, especially after outings in wooded areas. Try spraying your pets with a

tick repellent before they go out into tick infested areas for a hike with you. Consult your vet for proper removal of ticks.

Heartworm disease:

This is a life-threatening parasite transmitted in dogs and cats by mosquito bites. Heartworms damage the heart, lungs, and other organs. Symptoms include weight loss, coughing, listlessness, and rapid tiring. Giving a once a month oral disease medication can easily prevent this disease from affecting your pet. Before starting any heartworm prevention program with your pet, they first must receive a heartworm test. Call our low cost vaccination clinic at (408) 727-3383 ext. 827 for more information on heartworm testing and medication.

Foxtails:

These barbed seeds of dried grasses and weeds can be dangerous to your pet. They enter into your pet's nose, eyes, ears and/or feet, and then can travel deeper throughout the body of your pet. If your pet is pawing at his eyes or ears, squinting, rubbing his head on the ground, experiencing violent sneezing, limping or showing signs of small inflamed spots on the skin, your pet may have foxtails and should see the veterinarian immediately. Keep your yard clear of these weeds and examine your pets daily especially after being outdoors.

Exercise:

Before beginning an exercise program with your pet, check with your vet to make sure that your pet is physically capable of what you have planned for them, especially if your pet is older, overweight, arthritic or short-faced (makes it difficult to breath during heavy exercise). Young dogs (12 months and under) should not be allowed to jog with you as they are still growing and can do damage to their muscular and skeletal structure. Always keep your dog on a leash and start slowly if your pet is out of shape. Limit exercise to early morning or late afternoon to beat the heat. Offer cool, fresh water at frequent intervals (every 15 minutes). Sidewalks can heat up to searing temperatures so keep your pets off the pavement in the heat of day.

Hot car dangers:

Leaving your pet in the car may be hazardous to its health. When it is just 80 degrees outside, a car can heat up to over 120 degrees in just minutes! In a temperature that high, your pet could easily die. Leave your pet at home even when making short errands in your car. Take your pet with you only in the very early morning, making sure to park in the shade or take them late at night, when the sun has gone down. Roll down every window in the car about 2 to 3 inches, just make sure they are not down so far your pet can get his head out the window and escape. A good precaution is to always have cool water available, no matter what the air temperature, when traveling with your pet in the car.

Heat stroke:

As a pet owner, you need to be aware of this summertime risk. Remember that pets can't sweat like people do when they get hot. To cool themselves off they must seek shade, pant and drink extra water. If they cannot cool themselves, they may develop heatstroke, a life-threatening situation. Warning signs are heavy panting, glazed eyes, rapid pulse, dizziness, vomiting, a deep red or purple tongue, and general confusion. Contact your vet immediately if you suspect that your pet is suffering from heatstroke. To avoid situations that could bring on heatstroke, never leave your pet in a car alone, don't give pets short haircuts (they could get sunburn) and make sure that your pet always has access to shade and cool, fresh water. If your animal remains in the house while you are gone during the heat of the day, try leaving a low placed fan on to help keep them cool.

Heads in the wind:

It may seem as if your pet really enjoys being in the wind, but the practice of letting your dog ride in the bed of your truck or stick his head out the window of your car is actually quite unsafe for them! Bugs, sand, dirt and even small pieces of gravel can imbed into your dog's eyes, causing blindness, or become lodged in your dog's nasal passages, causing difficulty breathing. Keep the windows rolled up high enough so your pet cannot stick his head out the window and leave the "wind surfing" that your pet would like to do for times at home in front of the fan.

Dogs and trucks:

A dog untied in the bed of an open truck is not only illegal in California but is very unsafe for the pet. Traveling unsecured, your dog has no way of “holding on to something” like people do when they ride in the back of trucks. When the truck suddenly stops, starts, or turns, your dog will be thrown around. Sometimes dogs are thrown out of the truck completely only to suffer severe internal injuries or be hit by a passing vehicle. Some dogs have even leapt out of truck after spotting a squirrel, cat or another dog on the street. If you must have your dog ride in the back of your truck, make sure they are securely tied to the middle of the bed, right behind the cab. Make sure the leash is short enough that they cannot possibly reach either side of the truck bed walls. If tied too long, they still may try to leap out and then hang themselves as you are driving. Better yet, buy a crate that you secure in the bed of your truck for your dog to ride in. That way they are safe from the wind and cannot leap out. Or even better, let them ride in the cab with you.

Vaccinations:

Don't forget that your pet needs yearly vaccinations to remain healthy. Call our affordable vaccination clinic at (408) 727-3383 ext. 828 for more information.

Humane Society Silicon Valley Adoption news



Tyra and Tenaya, the domestic short hair cats

Hi, I'm Tyra, a 3-year-old domestic short hair. I am as sweet as candy and soft as silk. I like to be petted, and I am very playful too! If you have attention to give, I am more than willing to receive it. You won't be disappointed, so come down and meet me today! My ID is 42500

Tyra

number is 44109

Hi, I'm Tenaya, an 8-year-old domestic short hair mix. I'm a lovely lady, looking for a brand new home. I would love a family that I could cuddle up with while you watch T.V. or read a book. I can't wait to meet my new family, and hope you are it! My ID



Tenaya

About Humane Society Silicon Valley

Humane Society Silicon Valley (HSSV) is an independent, non-profit agency offering quality adoptions, medical care and education programs to enhance the human-animal bond. Established in 1929, HSSV has served Silicon Valley for 77 years and has adopted more than 500,000 animals into permanent, loving homes. HSSV is an “open door” shelter and accepts animals 24-hours a day, seven days a week. HSSV's medical center offers affordable spaying/neutering, vaccinations and microchips to the public. More information about HSSV can be found at www.hssv.org.