

The longer days and nicer weather of summer bring the potential for several health hazards to animals that are seen more commonly in the warm months. Here are a few of the more common conditions seen in the ER during the summer.

Allergic reactions are commonly caused by insect bites or bee stings and can vary in severity. Mild reactions will cause hives and itchiness on the body and facial swelling of the muzzle, ears and around the eyes. More severe reactions will cause vomiting in dogs and labored breathing in cats. The most dangerous type of allergic reaction will cause a severe drop in blood pressure and life threatening shock. Although treatment of some allergic reactions, like hives, may only entail antihistamines and observation, it is never wrong to have your pet examined by a veterinarian if they develop a reaction. If vomiting, diarrhea, labored breathing, lethargy or weakness is seen, your pet should be examined as soon as possible.

External wounds are common in the summer and are often treated just like wounds to humans. Very superficial abrasions can be gently cleaned and monitored at home. They should be cleaned with mild soap and water not hydrogen peroxide. Lacerations that break through the skin, and any wound created by an animal bite, should be examined by a veterinarian. If you are hiking and do not have quick access to a veterinarian you can clean the wound and either place a light bandage to prevent further contamination or cover the area with a clean sock or t-shirt. If the wound is bleeding, apply direct pressure to the area for 3-5 minutes to help a clot form. If the bleeding is more severe, a tourniquet can be placed. For more information on what to pack in your first aid kit check out the video on our YouTube Channel.

Overexertion on warm days can lead to a variety of symptoms. Fatigue and dehydration are common after activity on warm days. Free access to water should always be provided. If you notice significant weakness, fatigue, vomiting, diarrhea or labored breathing, stop activity immediately, find shade and have your pet seen as soon as it is possible. Institute cooling measures such as increasing air flow with a fan after soaking fur with cool not cold water, and applying ice packs can be to the paws. During transport to the veterinarian towels, soaked with cool water can be applied to the body. Flat faced breeds, like bulldogs and pugs, as well as animals with known respiratory diseases are particularly sensitive to the heat and should not be allowed to exercise during hot days. Animals should never be left in parked cars on warm days. For more information on heat stroke visit our website www.AnimalMedicalSpecialists.com.

Barbecues and summer parties can present multiple hazards. Bones, corn on the cob, high fat foods, pitted fruits, BBQ skewers and certain toxic foods, like grapes, onions and garlic, are potential hazards. Ingestion of poultry or pork bones may cause gastrointestinal upset, and occasionally constipation. Beef bones can be more difficult to digest and may be cause for more concern. Ingestion of a skewer, peach pit or corn cobs, warrant a trip to a veterinarian immediately. High fat foods may cause vomiting and diarrhea and can lead to severe inflammation of the pancreas and should not be fed to pets. Alcohol, grapes, chocolate, garlic and onions are toxic to animals and should be avoided. Marijuana is also common these days and can cause severe lethargy and, and in some cases of exposure seizures and coma. Care should be taken to avoid exposure. A veterinarian should be consulted if you believe your pet has ingested any of these products.