

Pet owners should take extra precautions during Fourth of July celebrations to prevent runaway animals

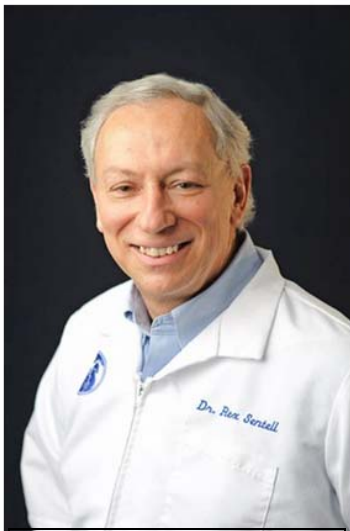
Jessica Layne

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Dr. Rex Sentell of
Palm City Animal Clinic

PALM CITY – The summer months often lend themselves to outdoor activities, including large gatherings and barbecues. With an increased number of people and the loud volume that can accompany these events, pets can easily become stressed or frightened.

Most prevalent during the summer months are Fourth of July celebrations, where noisy fireworks can frighten animals, causing them to run away. The Humane Society of the Treasure Coast and local veterinarian, Dr. Rex Sentell of Palm City Animal Clinic, confirm this holiday as one of the largest weekends for runaway pets.

“Shelters consistently note increases in the number of animals that are found stranded after the Independence Day holiday,” explained Dr. Sentell. “Fortunately, this can be easily prevented. The best option is to keep your animals indoors or on a leash during fireworks and other loud activities. Having your pets microchipped is another important way to ensure they will be returned to you should they run away,” Sentell added.

Dr. Sentell recommends microchipping pets for the multiple benefits associated with this common and safe procedure. When shelters or animal control centers can identify pet owners easily, they can return pets faster, an advantage for everyone involved. When pets are reunited more quickly with their owners, it reduces the stress on animals and their human family, while also reducing the costs that shelters incur for housing and feeding animals while their owners search for them.

For pet owners, fireworks are not the only thing to be concerned about this summer. Similar to the precautions humans take to avoid heat stroke and over-exposure to the sun during these hot months, it is important to protect pets from many of the same threats.

When bringing pets outdoors for exercise or play time during the high temperatures of the summer months, limit their time spent in the sun. Animals with shorter coats risk the chance of getting sunburned, and those with longer hair can easily overheat. For these reasons, it is important to provide plenty of fresh, cold water for your animals at all times, and to maintain proper grooming so their hair does not become matted or overgrown. Also, when walking pets, be especially cautious of the temperature of cement and asphalt that can often be hot enough to burn the pads or paws of your animal. It is best to walk pets during the early morning or late afternoon hours, when the temperatures have cooled.

It is not only direct sunlight that pet owners should be conscious of. Leaving animals in an unattended car can be a fatal mistake. With temperatures outside reaching the high 90's, the heat trapped inside a vehicle can reach well above 100 degrees, regardless of whether windows are left slightly open, or if it is only for a short amount of time. It only takes a matter of minutes to make the difference between life and death for animals left inside of an unattended vehicle.

In addition to being mindful of the dangers of sun and heat exposure during summer months, it is important to take other preventative measures as well. While regular heartworm prevention should be administered year round, fleas, ticks and mosquitoes are more prevalent during these warmer months, increasing the importance of maintaining heartworm medicine for both your canine and feline companions. Pets with arthritis can also experience increased joint pain with the increased heat, so you may need to consult with your veterinarian regarding exercises or medications to relieve your animal's symptoms.

We also associate hurricane season, which began June 1, with the summer. When weather becomes frightening, your pet can become stressed due to storms. If an evacuation were necessary, it is vital to have an emergency plan in place for your whole family - including your pets. Unfortunately, family pets are commonly left behind and become victim to storms because prior plans were not made.

"Just because it is hot outside, doesn't mean that everything must change with regard to your pet's lifestyle and behaviors," Dr. Sentell said. "We already do similar things for ourselves - apply sunscreen, find shady areas, carry water bottles. It's just about remembering that our four-legged friends need a little help from us to do the same for them."

Top 10 Tips For Pet Safety This Summer

1. Limit outdoor activities & exercise time
2. Maintain heartworm medicine to prevent disease from influx of mosquitoes
3. Be cautious of hot asphalt in order to protect paws when walking your pets
4. Never leave an animal in an unattended car, even if windows are slightly open
5. Provide plenty of fresh, cool water
6. Maintain proper grooming - shorter hair is best to avoid heat exhaustion
7. Be aware that arthritic animals will experience more joint problems in summer heat
8. Have an emergency plan for your animals in case of a hurricane
9. Large crowds and loud noises, such as fireworks, can frighten animals and cause stress
10. Pay attention to animals showing symptoms of heat stress or stroke

Signs of Heat Exhaustion

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|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Heavy or Excessive Panting | 5. Collapse |
| 2. Disorientation | 6. Vomiting |
| 3. Unresponsive to name | 7. Change in color of gums |
| 4. Lethargy | |

About Palm City Animal Clinic

Established in 1981, Palm City Animal Clinic is dedicated to providing the best possible care for your pets. With focuses on compassionate care in surgery, physical therapy and rehabilitation, preventative medicine, extensive diagnostics, and emergency service, Palm City Animal Clinic combines exceptional medical care with a caring philosophy for pets and their owners. For more information, call 772-283-0920, visit www.palmcityanimalclinic.com or find us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/PalmCityAnimalClinic.