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HOT OVEN OR HOT CAR – IT’S THE SAME THING

BUTTE COUNTY, Calif. — Common sense tells most people that leaving their pet inside a parked vehicle on a hot summer day could be dangerous after an extended period of time. However, most people don’t realize just how quickly the temperature can skyrocket.

Warm weather can literally be a killer for a dog left inside a car. Did you know that on warm days, the inside of a car heats up very quickly? When it’s 85 degrees out, the temperature inside a car – even with the windows left slightly open – can soar to 102 degrees in 10 minutes, and reach 120 in just half an hour. On hotter days, the temperature will climb even higher. Parking in the shade or leaving the windows cracked does virtually nothing to alleviate this dramatic increase in heat. Even leaving your dog for “just a minute” may be too long.

In addition to being left inside vehicles, pets may be at risk while out for a walk, waiting at home or riding in the back of a pick-up truck. It’s just as hot on the exterior of a vehicle as well as the concrete and asphalt. Truck beds, even if they have a liner, are no exception. Remember the last time you sat down on a scorching seat or gripped a searing hot steering wheel? Not only are animals at risk for heatstroke, like human extremities, their paws may be severely blistered or burned if exposed to hot surfaces.

Pets are much less efficient at cooling themselves than humans. A dog’s normal body temperature ranges from 101 to 102.5 degrees Fahrenheit. Dogs can withstand a body temperature of 107 to 108 degrees for only a very short period of time before suffering brain damage – or even death. A body temp of 107-108 degrees for a dog is the equivalent of 104-105 in a human. Dogs for example, have sweat glands only in their nose and the pads of their feet, which are inadequate for cooling during the hot summer days. Panting and drinking cool water helps cool them, but if they only have overheated air to breathe, animals can suffer heatstroke, brain and organ damage in just 15 minutes. These effects are increased for short-nosed breeds such as pugs and bulldogs, senior or overweight pets and/or any pets with health or cardiovascular problems.

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Symptoms of heat stroke may include the following:

- Heavy panting
- Exhaustion or agitation
- Vomiting
- Rapid heartbeat
- Excessive thirst
- Fever, dizziness
- Lack of coordination
- Profuse salivation
- Glazed eyes
- Deep red or purple tongue
- Grayish gums
- Unconsciousness

If an animal shows any of these symptoms take immediate steps to gradually lower its body temperature. Following these tips could save its life:

- Move the animal into the shade or an air conditioned area.
- Apply ice packs or cold towels to its head, neck and chest or immerse it in cool (not cold) water.
- Let it drink small amounts of cool water or lick ice cubes.
- Take it directly to a veterinarian.

In many states, including California, it’s against the law to leave a pet unattended in a parked vehicle in a manner that endangers the health or safety of the animal. Despite these laws, and basic common sense, many companion animals die every year from preventable heat related illness. That’s why it’s important to share this information. Help spread the word by following these tips:

- Remind friends and family to keep their pets at home during the summer months if they’ll be going anywhere pets are not allowed.
- Educate others by distributing posters or by leaving brochures on windshields. United Animal Nations has flyers available for a small fee (\$3 for 25) as well as free download and print flyers and signs. Visit www.mydogiscool.com.
- Get involved. If you see a pet in a parked vehicle during a summer day, go to the nearest store and have the owner paged. Enlist the help of a local police officer or security guard or call the local police department and/or animal control office.

For more information concerning your pets’ safety, you can call the Butte County Animal Control Office at (530) 538-7409 or (530) 891-2907 Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

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For further information, contact: K. ‘Beau’ Beauregard, Animal Control Supervisor,
Telephone (530) 538-7409 or E-mail: kbeauregard@buttecounty.net.

Butte County Public Health Department

Our Mission: To protect the public through promoting individual, community and environmental health.