

SUMMER HAZARDS

Just heard the term “sweltering” used to describe the month of August. A very descriptive word, I think, for the series of hot, muggy days we have been experiencing during the dog days of summer, so called from the star groups Canis Major and Minor, the big and little dog. The summer’s brightest star is Sirius in the Canis Major constellation. Ancient Romans thought Sirius gave heat to the earth, but during the summer, when it rises and sets with the sun, they believed Sirius increased the heat of the sun, so they called these days *caniculares dies*, or days of the dogs.

While the long, hot and humid days persist, we want to enjoy our rapidly waning summer to the fullest, but we sometimes forget that our pets suffer from the same problems humans do – overheating, dehydration and sunburn – when the weather heats up.

Because their cooling systems are different and less efficient than ours, dogs can be susceptible to heatstroke under conditions that might not be uncomfortable or life-threatening for humans. Their skin is more for protection against the cold; they lack the sweat glands, except around their paw pads, that keep us cool. Instead, they cool by panting, bringing in air to cool

off the mucous membranes and blood vessels in their mouth and tongue. As air is expelled, the extra heat leaves along with it. This system works well, except in situations of high humidity or close quarters.

Certain dogs are more at risk to heat-related issues. Brachiocephalic, or snub-nosed breeds, such as Pugs, Lhasa Apsos and Boxers, are more susceptible to heatstroke because their nasal passages are smaller and it is harder to circulate sufficient air for cooling. Overweight dogs, with extra fat layers that act as insulation trapping in heat, also

can have restricted breathing capability. Very young or very old dogs can be more prone to heat damage.

Think of your car as an oven, because it can become one very quickly. Never leave your pet alone in a closed vehicle. Leaving a dog in a closed, parked car, even on a cloudy day, can have disastrous results. The hothouse effect in a car is quite rapid, even with the windows partially open. Cars parked in direct sunlight can reach temperatures of 131 to 172° Fahrenheit within 15 minutes on a day in the 80’s. The degree of direct sunlight, the color of the car, amount of ventilation, the humidity and the heat generated from a panting dog will all affect the inside temperature of the



vehicle. Parking in the shade is good for a short stop, but offers little protection as the sun shifts.

If you pull alongside a closed, parked car and notice a panting pet inside, the most important thing to do is act quickly. Enlist help in locating the owner of the vehicle. Be aware that the owner might be embarrassed or ashamed and might blame you for making a fuss. If the owner cannot be located quickly, contact the proper authorities. On Nantucket, the non-emergency police number is 228-1212. Do not try to break into a locked car by yourself. It is a criminal offense and may also make you vulnerable to legal action by the vehicle owner.

Hot asphalt and hot sand can quickly affect a dog’s body temperature as well as burn-sensitive paw pads. If your dog accompanies you on a run or bike ride, try to go in the early or late hours of the day. If you go to the beach, be sure to provide some shade, bring water and rinse sand and salty residue off with fresh water when you return home.

By knowing the symptoms of heatstroke and how to respond, you can avert potentially disastrous situations for your pet. Early signs of heatstroke include loud and excessive panting, gasping for air, profuse salivation and restless pacing. There might be dizziness, wobbling, anxious expression or refusal to obey commands. The tongue and gums become dry and darken to purple or red, the eyes glaze and walking becomes difficult, and as internal temperatures rise, vomiting or bloody diarrhea can occur. If breathing

becomes quiet or faint following these symptoms, the animal will most likely collapse or lose consciousness.

Heatstroke is a medical emergency and quick action is imperative. Call or have someone call the veterinarian. Get your pet into the shade or indoors, offering bits of ice or small amounts of water. Apply cool, not cold, water soaked towels, particularly around head, neck and groin areas to slowly cool the animal down. If your dog is unable to stand or is unresponsive, seek veterinary assistance immediately. Even if you think your dog is recovering, confer with your vet.

Now that you know how heatstroke can occur, how quickly it becomes deadly, and the situations where it is likely to occur, try to avoid putting your pet at risk. Always provide plenty of clean, fresh water for your dog, particularly when enjoying the outdoors. There are spill-proof containers that work well in the car, and a number of portable options for those with pets on the go.

The most obvious solution of all is to leave your pet inside at home with a large bowl of fresh water when you run your errands in the car or when you are involved in outdoor activities in the heat of the day. ■

Jan Jaeger is owner of Geronimo’s, Ltd., Nantucket’s pet supply and gift shop, and is a member of DWAA and CWA (Dog and Cat Writer’s Associations of America). Her pets at home are Junior, a Chesapeake Bay Retriever, and two cats. At the shop are cats Messrs. Fish and Chips, Flower bunny, Millie guinea pig and two budgies. Send e-mail to jan@geronimos.com.

The Nantucket Lighthouse School
& The Nantucket Atheneum Present:



STORYBLAST WITH ODDS BODKIN

Friday, August 8 4:00 p.m. for ages 3 and up
Atheneum Great Hall 7:00 p.m. for ages 5 and up

FREE tickets for limited seating available at the Atheneum and the Lighthouse School beginning August 2nd.

Plus, join Odds on Saturday, Aug. 9, 9:30 a.m.-noon, for a workshop, “Door to Imagination: How to Awaken Your Inner Storyteller.” \$50 fee. Pre-register at the Atheneum Weezie Library. Adults and teens welcome.



With generous support from the Nantucket Arts Council, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Champion, and Ms. Martha Berman and Mr. Robert Lipp.



IMAGINING VENICE

The Artists Association of Nantucket would like to sincerely thank everyone who helped make the Annual Benefit Auction & Gala a tremendous success!

Our artist members who donated 100% of the proceeds of the sale of their work to the organization.

Host Committee

Laurie & Bob Champion • Nancy & Alan Forster • Joyce & Seward Johnson
Alice & David Rubenstein • Barbara & David Spidler
Nancy Allen & Peter Steingraber • Joan & John Beni
Carol & Erik Christensen • Lummy & Ben Gannett
Randy & Steve Goldberger • Lynn & Nick Nicholas
Susan & Ken Richardson • Penny Scheerer & John Schwanbeck

Our wonderful, creative Auction Committee:

John Brewer • Bruce Andrew Korson
Carol Christensen • Alison Cooley • Julie Gifford
Ethan Griffin • Tracey Gonçalves • Christine Sanford

Craig Ceni, Surfing Hydrangea • Ecliff & the Swingdogs
Kris Kinsley & Pat Woodley Hancock
John Lochtefeld • Michael Molinar, Flowers on Chestnut
Ken Douglas, New England Paper Tube Co.
Nantucket New School • Rafael Osona
Susan M. Warner Catering • Strong Wings

Our hardworking, talented staff and enthusiastic volunteers for their many hours of preparation, set up, and clean up.

Thank you!