

High temperatures become dangerous for pets

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By Ana B. Ibarra



The Central California Disaster Team provided assistance with the care of pets that were evacuated during last month's Hunters Valley fire in Mariposa County. ANA B. IBARRA — aibarra@mercedsunstar.com

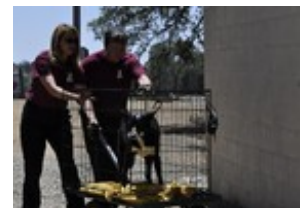
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Extreme temperatures can be dangerous for furry friends, but there are several things pet owners can do to reduce the number of animal deaths caused by heat, according to the Central California Animal Disaster Team.

Beth Caffrey, a CCADT spokeswoman, said every year hundreds of pets in the Central Valley become victims of the summer's high temperatures.

Heat-related accidents happen because many people do not recognize the symptoms of an overheated pet, Caffrey said. Some symptoms include difficulty breathing, excessive panting, drooling, increased heart rate and weakness.

Caffrey explained that once an animal overheats, there is a very short window of time to help them.



The most common mistake people make is leaving their pets in an unattended car, she said.

“A lot of times, people think it’s OK to take their pets with them in their cars because they plan to make a quick stop at a 7-Eleven, but then something comes up and they leave their pets alone longer than expected,” Caffrey said.



The best place to leave your pets? At home or in a safe, air-conditioned space, she said.

The CCADT reminds pet owners that cars are like ovens, even when the windows are cracked. On a 78-degree day, cars can heat up to 90 degrees, and that’s when parked in shade, according to CCADT research.

Another thing to keep in mind is that flat-faced pets, such as pugs, French bulldogs and Persian cats, need extra care because they cannot pant and cool down as effectively as longer-muzzled pets.

The organization also advises pet owners to provide their animals with plenty of fresh water, avoid walking them on hot asphalt and help remove their winter coat by giving them a good brushing, or shaving pets that have thick coats.

The CCADT, which specializes in disaster preparedness for pets, stresses the importance of developing an evacuation plan for pets.

“It seems people are becoming more aware about planning for disasters; they prepare for themselves, but sometimes they forget to prepare for their pets,” Caffrey said. “The best thing a pet owner can do is have a go-bag ready. In this go-bag you want to include the basics, like food and water, but you also want to make sure you have your pet’s vaccination record.”

According to the CCADT, pet owners should also create a “buddy system” with a trusted friend or neighbor who can evacuate the pets in case the owners are away from home.

The organization also suggests assembling emergency kits that include photos of owners and pets together. These photos can help reunite an owner and a pet in case the two are separated.

Based in Fresno, the CCADT assists county agencies with animal evacuations and sheltering during emergencies and disasters. Most recently, the CCADT helped with animal sheltering during the Hunters fire in Mariposa County.

The CCADT serves six counties in the Central Valley: Merced, Fresno, Madera, Kings, Tulare and Mariposa. For more information on how to keep pets healthy during the summer, visit the nonprofit’s page at www.ccad.org.

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