



THE BLUE CROSS

*Britain's pet charity*

# Summer survival guide



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As temperatures rise, follow our guide to keep your pets safe in the sun.

## Dogs and cats

Pale-coloured dogs and cats are vulnerable to sunburn; particularly their ears, noses and sparsely haired areas. Sun damage can lead to skin cancer which may require extensive surgery – even amputation in severe cases.

The best prevention is to keep your pet indoors when the sun is strongest, between 11.00am and 3.00pm.

Alternatively, cover vulnerable areas or regularly apply a non-toxic waterproof human sunblock or a product specifically for pets. Seek prompt veterinary advice if your dog or cat's skin looks sore, crusty or scaly.

Your pet needs access to clean water at all times, ideally in a large bowl filled to the brim. Older animals, particularly cats, are vulnerable to dehydration. Don't forget your dog needs fresh water if you're at the beach – drinking seawater is likely to make your dog ill.

Grooming is important, especially for longhaired animals. A tangle-free coat will protect your pet's delicate skin and keep them cool. Some animals may need their coats trimming – seek advice from a professional groomer.

## Heatstroke

Animals can suffer fatal heatstroke within minutes. Never leave your dog (or any pet) alone in a car – even with the windows open, and avoid exercising during the heat of the day. Signs of heatstroke include collapse, excessive panting, and dribbling. If you suspect your animal is suffering, remove him to a cool place, wet his coat and contact a vet immediately. Avoid overcooling, especially small pets.

## Going on holiday

Plan your holiday well in advance. If you are taking your pet with you, make sure the accommodation is pet-friendly: are pets allowed in all rooms, is outside space secure, will you be able to buy the food your pet is used to?



## Taking your pet abroad:

- Leave at least nine months to arrange for a pet passport. Dogs and cats need to be microchipped and vaccinated, and passports are only issued six months after a satisfactory blood sample.
- Check your pet's vaccinations are up to date and that you have supplies of any necessary medication
- If your pet is microchipped ensure your contact information is correct
- Make sure your dog's tag has your mobile number or a local contact for you on holiday
- Check your pet insurance policy covers your pet abroad, and familiarise yourself with requirements to bring your pet back into the UK
- Consult your vet about protection from diseases your pet may encounter abroad, eg Leishmaniasis from sandfly bites

## Travelling in the car:

- Make sure your dog is secured by a harness or barrier and that there is plenty of ventilation
- Sun screens on the windows will offer protection from direct sunlight
- Avoid the midday heat by travelling early or late in the day
- You can use a misting spray to keep your dog cool, but avoid his face

## Choosing a boarding cattery or kennel:

- Get a personal recommendation
- Drop in without an appointment and ask to look around
- Check your kennel/cattery is licensed by the local authority
- Book early – the best places get booked up far in advance
- Check if animals are housed individually; they should not be able to make nose or paw contact with others
- Ask about insurance cover in case of a veterinary emergency
- Ensure the location is not prone to flooding
- Find out how many staff there are per animal in the kennels
- Check the living area is warm, secure, clean and dry, with plenty of bedding
- Individual cat pens should have toys, a scratching post and a shelf where the cat can rest
- A good kennel/cattery will insist on seeing up to date proof of vaccinations and will ask for full information about your pet, including diet



## Rabbits and small animals

Flystrike (myiasis) is a nasty condition that occurs when flies lay their eggs on or near rabbits. These hatch into maggots and then feed on the rabbit – causing pain, severe shock, and often death. It's essential to check your outdoor rabbits – and house rabbits – at least twice a day to make sure they're clean and free from anything that may attract flies. Keep hutches clean and dry, and disinfect them at least once a week. Repellents such as "Rearguard" may help protect your rabbit. If you find any maggots on or near your rabbit contact your vet immediately.

## Top tips for small pets:

- Position hutches and runs in the shade, moving them as necessary, and keep them off the ground to improve ventilation
- The best runs have a covered area to provide shade and shelter
- Water should be available around the clock and kept topped up – it will evaporate faster in hot weather
- On a long journey, give your pet a piece of apple or celery to eat, for added moisture
- Mist your rabbit with cool water to help them remain at a comfortable temperature
- Brush out excess fur. If you have a longhaired rabbit, consider having the coat cropped by a professional groomer.

## Horses

Ensure your horse has access to a shady area in the field, and is protected from flies. Long manes and tails are a natural fly defence, but if you prefer your horse to have a pulled mane and forelock then you could use a fly fringe or mask – watch out for rubbing though. You may also want to buy a fine-mesh anti-fly rug and a good quality fly repellent.

You should monitor your horse's weight all year, but be extra vigilant over the

summer when there is plenty of grass. Use a weigh tape and keep a weekly chart. If you notice a weight gain then restrict grazing hours and/or use a well-fitted muzzle for short periods. If your horse is eating hard feed, consider reducing it or cutting it out.

## Remember:

- Horses can suffer from sunburn. Protect exposed, unpigmented, white and pink areas of the skin, like the muzzle, with a suitable hypoallergenic waterproof sunblock cream.
- A constant supply of clean, fresh water is essential to prevent dehydration
- A salt lick will help replace nutrients lost through sweating
- Horses' feet can dry out in warmer weather so keep them well hydrated – your farrier can advise which products to use





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**For more information about all aspects of  
pet care, visit [www.allaboutpets.org.uk](http://www.allaboutpets.org.uk).**

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