

Keep pets safe in the summer heat

With the hot days of summer here, many Ontarians take advantage of the warm weather by hitting the road and exploring the province with family and friends.

For some, that means bringing furry friends along for the ride, so planning for the pet's comfort and safety should be a part of any trip preparations. Here are some tips to keep animals safe this summer.

Never leave a pet unattended in the car ? the temperature inside a vehicle will quickly become much hotter than the temperature outside.

If a pet is discovered left unattended in a hot vehicle, call 310-SPCA (7722) in Ontario, the local SPCA or Humane Society, or the local police.

Ensure a pet is properly secured at all times. Smaller animals are more secure in a crate attached by a seat belt. If a pet is restrained with a leash or harness, make sure there is enough slack for them to move around a bit and adjust their position.

People like to stop and stretch their legs during a long car ride. So does their pet. Schedule rest breaks along the entire travel route to allow the pet to get out and exercise.

Always have fresh water available in the car. Bring favourite toys and a pillow to prevent the pet from becoming restless during the ride.

Add a pet emergency kit to the travel checklist that includes medical records, medicines and first aid items such as nail clippers and liquid bandages.

Help the pet prepare for its first road trip by taking short drives before the vacation. If the animal experiences motion sickness, consult the vet about possible medications.

Six out of 10 pet owners in Ontario travel with their pets at least once a year and more than half of all pet trips are with dogs.

Excessive panting, drooling, and listlessness are signs of heatstroke in animals. If these signs are witnessed in a pet, seek veterinary attention immediately, move the animal to a cool area and offer it drinking water.

?Summer is the time for road trips, outdoor fun and enjoying hot summer days, but it's also a time of potential danger, for both you and your pets,? Community Safety and Correctional Services Minister David Orazietti observed. ?Following these simple steps will help ensure your pets are safe and can enjoy the summer months just as much as you do.?