

# Summertime with your Pets

With Christmas, New Year and long, lazy summer days just ahead of us, spare a thought for those Australians who need our attention—our family pets. Among a variety of pets, Australians care for around 4 million dogs and 2.5 million cats.

Our pets bring much joy into our lives but they are also dependent on us for their health and safety. The summer break can be a time when we risk overlooking the needs of our pets. So before we 'kick back' to relax for the break, let's take a look at some of the things to remember about looking after our pets.

## Festive cautions

### DO:

- ✓ stick to your pet's regular diet
- ✓ give **dog** treats to your dog (not human food). This can include raw bones or a 'Kong' stuffed with dog treats
- ✓ supervise the dog when children are around
- ✓ keep your pets inside during fireworks or noisy celebrations
- ✓ in extreme cases, place your dog in a secure place in a living area, tether to a stable piece of furniture and carry on as normal.

### DON'T:

- ✗ leave presents containing food under the Christmas tree.
- ✗ give your dog chocolate: it is toxic to dogs
- ✗ give your dog cooked bones: they can splinter and dogs cannot digest them properly
- ✗ let your dog play with Christmas decorations, wrappings, ribbons etc. These could all be dangerous, maybe even toxic
- ✗ let your dog near electrical cords or other household items that it could chew
- ✗ give anyone a pet as a present unless you have asked if they want or can look after one. Too many pets are surrendered after Christmas when the novelty has worn off!
- ✗ pat the dog if it is distressed at loud noises; this will only reward the dog for 'stressing out'.

## Holiday help

### DO:

- ✓ arrange for holiday supervision and feeding, by arranging a boarding kennel or in-home pet minding
- ✓ secure your pets for travel in the car. Use either a harness or a carry cage
- ✓ take frequent breaks for drinks and toileting if travelling in a car
- ✓ pack water and water bowls for pets on long trips
- ✓ pack bedding, food and food containers if staying away overnight
- ✓ make sure your pets are fully vaccinated and protected against worms, ticks and fleas
- ✓ carry a first aid kit, including tweezers or tick removers.



## Holiday help

### DON'T:

- ✗ Leave your pets in a hot car, even with the windows down
- ✗ Let cats wander, especially at night, as they can attack native birds. Attach a bell to their collars and keep them inside at night.

## Summer sense

### DO:

- ✓ observe the rules for areas where dogs can swim and play off-leash
- ✓ carry a 'poo bag' and pick up the droppings: dogs don't have hands!
- ✓ try to avoid the summer sun during the hottest parts of the day. Your pets can get sunburnt and is at risk of skin cancer
- ✓ use sunblock on your pet's exposed areas such as ears, nose and lips
- ✓ provide cool, clean water. Some dogs even like ice blocks. You can freeze an ice-cream container full of water and give it to them
- ✓ exercise in the cooler part of the day, at a casual pace, taking regular water breaks
- ✓ protect elderly, very young and sick pets from the heat. Keep them in cool areas, with easy access to cool water
- ✓ keep pets inside on very hot or humid days. If this is not possible, make sure there is plenty of shade available at all hours of the day
- ✓ think about having your pet's fur clipped to assist it in keeping cool
- ✓ look for signs of heatstroke: panting, staring, anxious expression, refusal to obey commands, warm dry skin, high fever, rapid heartbeat, vomiting or collapse. Treat heatstroke by applying wet towels to your pet and call the vet
- ✓ bring pets inside during thunderstorms and tether dogs if necessary, as for fireworks precautions.

### DON'T:

- ✗ pat your dog if it is anxious or shaking during a thunderstorm.

## A good holiday for all!

At this time of the year don't leave your pets out of the celebrations. Make sure you give them the care and attention they have earned during the past 12 months!

*Teachers' Toolkit* would like to thank the following for their assistance in creating this article:

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**PetNet:** [www.petnet.com.au](http://www.petnet.com.au).

**PetsPlayground:** [www.petsplayground.com.au](http://www.petsplayground.com.au)

