

Autumn Safety Tips for Pets



There is nothing like the crisp, cool air and ever changing foliage to get you excited for the changing seasons. Your pet, too, is probably welcoming a break from summer's hot, sticky weather. However, autumn is also a time of lurking dangers for our furry friends. From household poisons to cold weather hazards, there are important safety issues to consider. Below are some tips to keep your pet happy and healthy during the autumn months.

Be Cautious of Rodenticides and Cold Weather Poisons

The use of rat and mouse poisons increase in the fall as rodents seek shelter from the cooler temperatures by attempting to move indoors. Rodenticides are highly toxic to pets and, if ingested, the results could be fatal. If you must use these products, please do so with extreme caution and put them in places inaccessible to your pets.

Many people choose fall as the time to change their car's engine coolant. Ethylene glycol-based coolants are highly toxic and spills should be cleaned up immediately. Consider switching to propylene glycol-based coolants— they are much less toxic than other engine coolants.

Keep School Supplies Out of Paws' Reach

Fall is back-to-school time. But in these times of home-schooling those of you with young children know that means items such as glue sticks, pencils and magic markers can be laying around for your pets to get at. Although these items are considered low toxicity to pets, gastrointestinal upset and blockages can occur if ingested. Be sure your children keep their school supplies out of your pet's reach.

Stay Clear of Mushrooms

Fall and spring are mushroom seasons. While 99% of mushrooms have little or no toxicity, the 1% that are highly toxic can cause life-threatening problems in pets. Since most toxic mushrooms are difficult to distinguish from nontoxic ones, the best way to prevent pets from ingesting these poisonous plants is to keep them away from areas where any mushrooms are growing. **Contact your veterinarian or the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center at (888) 426-4435 immediately if you witness your pet eating a wild mushroom.**



Watch Out for Wildlife

Autumn is the season when animals such as Skunks, Raccoons, Opossums, and Squirrels are preparing for hibernation, increasing the possibility of bites to those unlucky pets who find themselves in the wrong place at the wrong time. Pet parents should know what kinds of animals may be lurking in their environment—and where those animals are most likely to be found—so pets can be kept out of those areas.

Toxic Pond Algae

"Blue-green algae is a bacteria that during certain times of year, certain weather conditions, will produce a toxin that's very harmful to dogs," said Dr. Julie Schildt, an emergency and critical care veterinarian at the University of Tennessee's School of Veterinary Medicine. But when the weather is hot and there's been little rain, stagnant water conditions near the shore of ponds and lakes can prompt the algae to start pumping out toxins. "Dogs can develop signs very quickly, within 15 minutes of being in the water or drinking the water," Schildt said. "Those animals can have more neurologic signs—they might stagger around, they might drool, they might have seizures. It can lead to very quick, rapid death."

Other toxins produced by the algae can cause liver failure, and in that case symptoms might not become apparent until sometime later. "They could come out of the water and seem relatively OK, then go home and start to show signs like vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, not wanting to eat." The EPA recommends keeping your dog away from slimy water, or water that looks like it has foam or scum on its surface. Also avoid water if it smells bad or if it has an odd color, like blue, bright green, brown or red. For more information on these Pet Safety Topics, call the River Forest Fire Prevention Bureau at 708-714-3562 or your Veterinarian.