

**DOGS
DIE
IN HOT
CARS**

**DOGS
DIE
ON HOT
WALKS**

Cool dogs are happy dogs: Communications toolkit for summer dog care



Welcome to the **#DogsDieInHotCars** **#DogsDieOnHotWalks** campaign toolkit.

The aim of this toolkit is to provide evidence-based, welfare-related advice and for it to become a useful resource for organisations working directly with the public, who wish to safeguard animals by sharing summer safety, information and advice.

This kit contains:

- Social posts and suggested social media copy to raise awareness of the impact hot weather can have on animals and positive action the public can take. (English and Welsh language)
- Downloadable designed posters (English and Welsh language)
- Downloadable designed leaflets (English and Welsh language)



Campaign objectives

- **Unlike humans, dogs don't sweat to reduce their body temperature.** Instead, they pant. This will only work to a point. If they are too hot and panting is not sufficient to reduce their body temperature, heatstroke can develop and this can prove to be fatal for the dog.
- **Many people still believe it is OK to leave their dog alone in a car on a warm day** if they have left the windows open and/or have parked in the shade. This is simply not the case. Even when it doesn't feel very warm outside, temperatures can rocket. When it's 22°C outside, the temperature inside the vehicle can reach in excess of 47°C in the space of one hour.
- **It is impossible to impose a time limit on what may be considered safe to leave a dog for.** Some breeds of dog are more susceptible to heat stroke than others (for example very young or very old dogs, dogs with thick, heavy coats or those with very short, flat faces such as pugs and boxers) and may have underlying health conditions which will factor. With this in mind, our message is simple: **not long is too long.**

Dogs die on hot walks

- **The issues a dog experiences in terms of temperature regulation** while on walks are similar to dogs in hot cars. In this case, high environmental temperatures are compounded by exercise exhaustion.
- **Sadly, dogs are dying from heat exhaustion** due to a lack of awareness about when, where and how to exercise dogs and people not being able to respond quickly enough or recognise the signs of heat-related illness.



- **When a member of the public comes across a dog in distress in a car on a warm day,** their first reaction may be to call the RSPCA, or it may be to put a brick through the window. The correct course of action is to first establish the condition of the dog. If it doesn't look critical, try and find the owner (if it's a supermarket car park, for example, ask for a tannoy announcement to go out in-store). If the dog is displaying any signs of heatstroke, dial 999 immediately. The police are the only ones with the power to enter a vehicle. Even if the RSPCA were called to attend, inspectors would require the police to be present to enter the car.



Campaign objectives

- **Encourage the public not to leave their dogs** in cars and know to dial 999 if they see a dog in distress.
- **Encourage the public to walk their dogs** at dawn and dusk on warm days and get involved in the social movement #DogsatDawn #DogsatDusk.
- **Ensure the public knows the signs of heatstroke** and what to do should they fear their dog has a heat-related illness.
- **Bring greater public awareness** of the impact of heat on pets, horses, livestock and wild animals.

Key messages

Dogs die in hot cars

1. Aimed at dog owners:

‘Not long is too long’

We have been working to educate owners about the dangers of leaving pets alone in cars on warm days. It doesn't have to be a dog and it doesn't have to be a car; we have seen cases of dogs dying in conservatories and ferrets succumbing to the heat having been left.

2. Aimed at members of the public:

‘Call 999’

We have been working to educate the general public on the correct course of action to take should they come across a dog left alone in a car on a warm day.

These two campaigns are intertwined and promoted between the months of April and October in line with the requirements of the weather.

Achieving change

- **Share the assets provided** among your local networks and across social media platforms and websites.
- **Utilise key messages** and suggested post text that outlines the implications of and dangers associated with high temperatures, across social media platforms and websites.
- **A collaborative approach** maximises reach for our messages and campaign assets.
- **Demonstrate positive action** with suggested ways to entertain dogs on hot days, keeping them cool.

Dogs die on hot walks

1. Aimed at the general public:

‘If in doubt don't go out’

We are working to educate dog owners of the dangers of taking dogs out when temperatures soar. Dogs are susceptible to heat-related illnesses and can become unwell very quickly. Heat-related illnesses in dogs are dangerous and can sadly lead to loss of life.

2. We want the general public:

‘To know what to do’

to be able to recognise the signs of heatstroke.



Signs of heatstroke

Signs of heatstroke:

- Is the dog panting heavily?
- Is the dog drooling excessively?
- Does the dog appear lethargic, drowsy or uncoordinated?
- Is the dog vomiting?
- Has the dog collapsed?

If your dog is showing any of these signs please follow the emergency first aid steps and contact your nearest vet if necessary.

Here's what to do

For the best chance of survival, dogs suffering from heatstroke urgently need to have their body temperature reduced back down to normal levels.

Stop

further heating by stopping exercise or further heat exposure. Remove the dog from the hot vehicle or building. Get the dog out of the sun into the shade or create shade where possible.

Cool

by pouring any available water that is cooler than the dog over their body while avoiding the head, then creating a breeze using a fan, air conditioning or by opening windows.

Transport

the dog to your nearest vet's practice, with the air conditioning on or windows open. Make sure to call ahead to let your vet know you are on your way and the urgency of the situation.



Key calendar dates

April to September

When the Met Office communicates hot weather or heatwaves

Awareness days

These provide the perfect opportunity to remind the public of the dangers of leaving dogs in cars and walking dogs in hot weather, and how to ensure dogs are protected.

Social media

Hashtags increase campaign visibility on social media. The suggested hashtags here will help to reach a wider audience.

#DogsDieInHotCars

#DogsDieOnHotWalks

Dogs at dawn and Dogs at dusk explained

We have now included a social movement to promote the campaign #DogsDieOnHotWalks, in order to raise awareness among dog owners about when to walk their dogs during the summer months, when the weather gets warmer.

We are encouraging members of the public to post photographs of themselves and their dogs when out walking at the coolest part of the day, with the hashtags:

#DogsAtDawn and #DogsAtDusk

We hope that organisations will help us to promote this social movement via their social channels and encourage this behaviour as the norm amongst the general public. More information and how to promote this via your networks can be found within the social assets and suggested text sections of this toolkit.



Social media assets

You are welcome to use drafted social media assets which can be shared with personalised post text to your council/organisation area to raise awareness. Each of the images is based on real-life events. Our aim is to help the general public understand the true impact of heat exhaustion and heatstroke during the summer season.

Social images: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter

Suggested social post text, images and links (PDF)

Social assets:

Downloadable assets here

Leaflets:

Downloadable designed leaflets (PDF)

Posters:

Downloadable designed posters with and without crop marks to allow printing internally and externally

Cool dog summer workshops

Join us for an online workshop and discover more about your dog's physiology and heat-related illness, as well as ways to keep your dog cool and what to do in an emergency to keep your dog safe and prevent loss of life.

Email us: campaigns@rspca.org.uk

