

Well it's that time again. Our beautiful green hills of spring will all too soon dry to the golden brown of summer. To veterinarians it can only mean that we will soon be seeing a host of warm weather medical problems. What follows is a brief list of some of the common medical problems we see in our patients during the summer months; and some simple bottom line advice on how to prevent them.

The warm summer weather is always heralded in our area by the appearance of foxtails. These seed-pods of the wild grasses in our area become dry (hence those golden hills...) and find their way into ears, eyes, toes, and noses of dogs and cats with remarkable ease. If that's not enough, foxtails can also directly penetrate your pet's skin causing severe discomfort while spreading infection. If the foxtail can be found and removed this problem is easily resolved. But sometimes finding the offending foxtail can be challenging.

**BOTTOM LINE:** Your best bet is to not allow your pet to run in open fields with dry grasses during the summertime.

Over the years I've written many times about fleas and their effect on our pets' health. While the introduction of the newer flea products 10-15 years ago has dramatically curtailed the problem, we still see a fair amount of flea related disease. I suspect this year will be especially bad. It seems we have seen more flea problems this past winter and that may portend a bigger problem this summer.

**BOTTOM LINE:** Simply continue your monthly flea control efforts as recommended by your pet's doctor and you should be fine. For sure don't wait until you see fleas or flea related problems to show up on your pet. That approach only assures the fleas will have a big head start.

Most veterinarians would agree that canine Parvovirus infection is more common in the summer months. This aggressive intestinal virus is especially dangerous for puppies. While all breeds of dogs are potentially at risk, the Rottweiler breed is affected more commonly and more seriously than other breeds. A puppy infected with Parvo virus is not a lost cause. Most cases can survive and do well, though the treatment can be costly.

**BOTTOM LINE:** A good vaccination program, directed by your veterinarian, will prevent most cases of Parvo.

A less common but nonetheless concerning problem of summer is Fly Strike. This problem is most often seen in long-haired dogs that develop a skin sore or incur a skin wound that goes unnoticed by the owner. If untreated, flies can be attracted to the moist sore area and lay eggs there. The resulting fly larva (yes, maggots) will often thrive in the moist, warm undercoat of the longhaired dog causing more tissue damage, not to mention severe discomfort for the dog. If caught early, these areas clean up fairly nicely and with antibiotic can heal quickly.

**BOTTOM LINE:** Keep a close eye on your longhaired pet, especially if he/she spends time outside.

We tend to see an increase in dogfight wounds in the summertime. Perhaps the long, dry, warm days allow more opportunity for animal interaction. Sadly, we see a lot of dog-on-dog attacks occurring in public settings. If you are in a public place with your dog please keep him/her on a secure leash. You just might avoid a serious or fatal injury to your pet, not to mention a potential lawsuit. Additionally be sure your yard fencing and gates are secure to prevent your dog's escape and possible involvement in an altercation.

**BOTTOM LINE:** Good leashes and good fences prevent most of these tragedies.

Your pet's health should be a concern every season of the year. But the summer season in California brings some extra challenges. Most times these problems are easily prevented with some simple planning and thought.

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