

Leaving Your Pet In A Hot Car? There Is No Excuse

“I’m not going to be gone long.” This is what pet owners may tell themselves as they run inside the store to pick up a grocery or two, while their dog or cat is still inside the car.

“What is so concerning is that it can often take only a few minutes to cause serious harm to your pet,” says Mary Pecarski, a Registered Veterinary Technician (RVT) with the Ontario SPCA. “We ask pet owners, ‘Why risk putting your pet into danger like that?’ You never know what might interrupt your time away from the car causing you to be longer.”

There is never a good excuse for leaving your pet unattended in a vehicle. On hot days, it only takes a few minutes to cause serious harm to your pet.



Parked cars can quickly reach deadly temperatures, even on relatively mild days with the car parked in the shade and the windows slightly open. Sadly, Pecarski says, SPCAs across the country start receiving calls about pets being trapped in hot cars as soon as the temperature starts getting warmer.

“There is no excuse for leaving a pet unattended in a vehicle,” Pecarski adds. “Dogs have a very limited ability to sweat; even a short time in a hot environment can be life-threatening. A dog’s normal body temperature is about 39°C and a temperature of 41°C can be withstood only for a very short time before irreparable brain damage or even death can occur.”

Once a dog or cat is removed from the car, if heat stroke is suspected (excessive panting and drooling, listlessness or unconsciousness) prompt veterinary medical attention is vital. In the meantime, wet the fur immediately with lukewarm to cool water (not cold water). Bring the pet into the shade and offer drinking water.

Pecarski suggests that if you can’t take your pet with you when you leave your car, then just leave them at home where they are safe and cool.

If you witness an animal suffering in a hot car, you should call your local SPCA/Humane Society or local police.

The Ontario SPCA and partners across Canada have teamed up for the No Hot Pets campaign, which runs May 23 until Labour Day. Pecarski says that you can help raise awareness of the dangers of leaving pets in vehicles by pledging not to leave your own pets unattended in cars. You can also enter to win weekly prizes.

Visit www.nohotpets.ca for more information on the No Hot Pets campaign, and speak to your veterinary health care team to learn how you can protect your pet from summer heat dangers.

Contact:

Colleen McElwain
Canadian Animal Health Institute
(519) 763-7777