

Spring Pet Care Tips

Going from winter to spring naturally makes us feel happy and joyful. Change of seasons also drives us to start working on home projects or to clean out winter's dust and cobwebs with a good "spring cleaning". Many of us have planned spring outings that involve visiting public areas such as local, county or national parks, campgrounds, or perhaps the backyard is as far as you wish to go.

It goes without saying that our pets are included in spring activities, whether we're purposely bringing them with us on a trip, or they're simply in the same room with us. With this in mind, the Matawan Animal Advisory Committee has the following tips so that our pets stay safe:

Secure pets safely when traveling. Small pets such as cats and small-breed dogs should be in carriers, secured in the vehicle so as to minimize sliding. Larger dogs should wear a seatbelt harness. Never allow your dog to ride out in the open in the back of a pickup truck. Flying dirt and debris can injure their eyes, and sudden stops can cause major injury or throw them out of the truck bed. In addition, the ASPCA says that "...flying debris and insects can cause inner ear or...lung infections" (<http://www.aspca.org/pet-care/general-pet-care/springtime-safety-tips>).

Beware of toxic plants. Your favorite spring flowers, annuals and perennials may be toxic to your pet. "Plants that are reported to be toxic to dogs, cats or rabbits include Azalea, Crocus, Day Lily, Hyacinth, Easter Lily, Iris, Lily of the Valley, Morning Glory [and] Tulip", among others, according to Veterinary Pet Insurance (<https://www.petinsurance.com/healthzone/pet-articles/pet-health-toxins/Spring-Garden-Safety-for-Pets.aspx>). Although most pets don't eat flowers, don't assume yours won't. (This author had a dog that *loved* to eat flowers.) Keep an eye on pets to make sure they don't sample your plantings. (See also last week's column on toxic fertilizers.)

Keep pets away from cleaning products. According to PureLife 4Pets' website, "The safest cleaning supplies will be free of ammonia, chlorine, bleach, paraben and phosphates" (<http://www.purelife4pets.com/pet-owner-information/spring-safety-tips-for-pet-parents/>). If you do clean with products that contain the aforementioned ingredients, keep pets out of the area while cleaning and keep one or two windows open for fresh air.

Don't let your pet drink from standing water on the ground. Spring showers and sprinkler systems leave puddles which can harbor "...bacteria that will cause an upset stomach or other issues" (<http://www.purelife4pets.com/pet-owner-information/spring-safety-tips-for-pet-parents/>).

Never leave your pet unattended while he/she is swimming. Veterinary Emergency Service recommends you make sure pets have an easy way out if swimming in a lake, and keep swimming pools enclosed and inaccessible (<http://veterinaryemergencyservice.com/pet-care-tips/spring-summer>).

Keep screens or protective bars in all windows. Cats are especially likely to jump onto windowsills to gaze outside, and could fall through an unscreened window. "Bird owners should

make sure their feathered friends are protected from drafts”, too (<http://veterinaryemergencyservice.com/pet-care-tips/spring-summer>).

Please do not let pets roam the neighborhood. In addition, dogs should not be left outside unsupervised. A “...tethered dog can be attacked by another animal [and] will have no way to escape” (<http://www.purelife4pets.com/pet-owner-information/spring-safety-tips-for-pet-parents/>). Cats left to roam are subject to attack by other animals, may be hit by moving vehicles, or may be picked up as “strays”, and they also defecate in other peoples’ yards.

Your pet should always wear ID. Finally, all animal welfare organizations highly recommend that your pet has a microchip for identification, and he or she should also wear a tag with their name, your name, your address and phone number on it. If your pet is licensed through your municipality, the license also acts as ID and will facilitate finding your pet more easily if it’s picked up by local authorities.