

Ready... Set...Summer!

The sun is riding high in the sky, temperatures are getting up there and there's lots of summer fun to be had. You are not the only one who feels that way. Your Weimaraner is ready to drink in every drop of summer time activity. It's your job to make sure your dog enjoys the season and does it safely. Here are a few things to consider.

It's always good to have an annual checkup for your dog and the start of the summer is a great time to schedule that yearly vet visit. A "well dog" vet visit catches problems in their early stages and prepares you to take any necessary action. On your visit discuss ways to deal with ticks, fleas and other parasites that flourish in the warmer weather. Make sure that your dog is tested for heartworm and that you faithfully give the preventative medication. While some areas of the country have more incidents of heartworm than others, the American Heartworm Society reports that heartworm has been diagnosed in all 50 states.

Warmer weather means increased activity and exercise. Both humans and dogs have a tendency to pack on a few extra pounds in the winter season. Your dog may not have been as active during the colder months so take that under consideration before going full blast into heavy exercise. Avoid "weekend warrior" syndrome for yourself and your dog.

The age of your dog is another consideration when diving into summer activities. That young pup who used to play for hours in any weather is a memory of a few years ago. Make sure that you don't overtax the stamina of the older dog. Just as humans are urged to ease into more strenuous activity, the same should be applied to our ever ready, overly enthusiastic Weimaraner friend.

You'll probably be taking longer walks in the good weather and for those who walk on paved streets and sidewalks don't forget those surfaces heat up quickly. While our dogs have sturdy, well cushioned pads, even those can be injured. When the air temperature is the mid eighties, asphalt will heat up to 135 to 143 degrees. To give you an idea of how hot that is, an egg will fry in five minutes at 131 degrees. Ouch!

Swimming is a joy to most Weimaraners but remember they have to learn that skill. Introduction to water should be done slowly and never by a "sink or swim" method. If your dog is swimming in a pool make sure he or she is taught where the steps are and repeat lessons on how to safely exit the pool. Pool chemicals should be rinsed off and drinking pool water discouraged. When boating, remember that if you're wearing a life jacket your dog should be wearing a floatation device too.

Considering the knowledge and experience of the readers of this column, I shouldn't have to say this but it can't be overemphasized. Leaving a dog alone in a car is never a good idea but when temperatures rise it is asking for trouble. Not only is it a safety hazard for your dog, it is illegal in some states. If you're going to make some stops where your dog can't come in with you, leave your dog at home or travel with another person who can stay with the car.

Summer activities are some of the ones that our dogs love the most. Indulge your dog and yourself in the joys of summer but do it safely.

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