

Dogs at the Beach

WA has some fabulous dog beaches and river systems so when the family heads to the beach on a warm summers day the dog has to come along too. However, as responsible dog owners there are certain precautions that should be taken for the protection of the dog and the enjoyment of others at the beach.



Beach Etiquette

Before taking a dog to the beach or river, make sure that it is an area that dogs are allowed to be at and follow the regulations carefully. There are many areas throughout WA where dogs can play both on and off the lead and local councils will show these on their websites or with signage at the area. There are significant fines attached to taking a dog to an area that they are not permitted to be or allowing them off lead when dogs must be kept on leads.

Problems often arise when someone lets their dog off lead and then ignores it, allowing it to run rampant, or does not have it trained well enough to return to them when called. For other people who may have their own dog on a lead or be relaxing on the beach with their children, having an unknown dog running towards them or jumping on them can be distressing and quite

scary. It's not enough for the owner to be calling out apologies or ascertains that the dog is friendly. Even at a dog beach where a dog is allowed off-lead, he must still be well behaved around other dogs and must respond to verbal commands.

Retractable dog leads are fantastic for dogs at the beach. It allows them the opportunity to explore and play but also give you confidence that he will come back to you, even if he doesn't want to.

Of course, dog waste left on the beach would have to be the biggest complaint of the general community. Owners should always clean up after their pets out of respect for other beach-goers and if they want to ensure that the beach will remain one that dogs can visit for years to come. Yellow dog poo bags are almost always available at public places, but even better is to have your own bag dispenser attached to the lead. These are inexpensive, light weight and easily refilled.

Toys for the Water

For dogs that love the water, floating dog toys are a must. There are plenty of choices in shape and size including Frisbees, balls and tugs and they are fantastic as their bright colours make them easy to see, they are soft on the dog's mouth and will float on the surface of the water.

Train the dog to fetch their new toy first on land and only once he is absolutely focused on retrieving it, try a few short throws into the water. Gradually build up the distance but never stress the dog by making it too far and remember that if the dog won't fetch it, you will have to!

If a dog is just sandy, he can just be brushed off but salt water can be drying to the skin and should be washed off fairly quickly.

Most Better Pets and Gardens stores have a DIY dog bath which makes washing a dog on the way home from the beach a quick and easy task.



Encouraging Swimming

Most dogs can swim and usually enjoy it but there are breeds with large weighty bodies and little legs that find it very difficult. Some dogs take to water like the proverbial duck but if yours prefers to keep his feet firmly on dry land, don't force him or throw him into the water as this could make him scared for life.

The first time that a dog gets near the water, take the time to coax him in to shallow water using toys, treats and encouragement. Alternatively, invite another friend's water-loving dog to the beach and let the dogs play together. After a while, yours may follow his new friend into the water whilst chasing a ball or retrieving a stick.

If the dog begins to doggy-paddle only with his front legs, lift his hind legs and help him float until he catches on or have him wear a doggy life jacket. These are a great way to give him confidence without him tiring out too quickly and are really useful on boats and kayaks as well.

Sunburn

Dogs can be just as susceptible to sunburn as we are, especially those with light coloured noses and pink skin or thin and short hair. They can get burnt on the nose, ears, lips, snout, eyelids and chest and those that sleep on their backs can even get burnt on their belly, inner thighs and even testicles.

The best way to prevent sunburn is to avoid outdoor activities in direct sunlight in the middle of the day but of course, at the beach or even when the dog is in the backyard, he will inevitably be in the sun at some point.

Some dogs will happily wear doggy sun visors, hats and even sunglasses for a short period of time but others will find this very stressful. Dog sun-safe suits made from UV protection gear are available and could be useful for very susceptible dogs but they must be comfortable and allow the dog to move and breathe easily.



Pet-specific sunscreens are available and these are the only ones that should be used on a dog. Human sunblock contains substances that may be toxic to dogs when they lick it off, especially from their face. Pet sunscreen provides good protection, is quite sticky and contains a non-toxic product to discourage dogs from licking it off. The cream should be applied 20 minutes before going out into the sun and then every two hours as well as after swimming or bathing. To stop the dog from trying to lick the sunscreen off straight away, have some treats available to distract him or take him for a walk and play a game.

Sunburn on dogs looks very similar to humans and includes red and inflamed skin which may become flaky and feel hot. If a dog does get sunburn, seek treatment as soon as possible from a veterinarian who will be able to dispense some creams to sooth the area. Remember that if sunburn hurts you, it will also hurt your dog.

Never leave the dog in the car, even in the shade. The temperature in a vehicle can double within 12 minutes and leaving the window down a fraction is not enough to keep it cool. An animal could suffer terribly and even die before the temperature reached 55°C. Leaving a dog in a hot car is a serious crime and could result in significant fines or even a prison sentence.

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Summer Beach Safety

1. Just as you would the rest of the family, provide plenty of fresh water and shade for the dog and ensure that he has times to rest and cool down.
If the dog is out of shape or a senior, don't encourage him to run on the sand as this is very strenuous exercise and can result in a pulled tendon or ligament.
2. Take a few doggy treats as he will get hungry too!
3. If the ground is hot on your bare feet, it will also be hot for the dog. Don't make him walk on hot sand or bitumen.
4. Dogs are easy targets for jellyfish and stingers so be aware of the water conditions before allowing them in the water.
5. Don't allow the dog to drink too much seawater as the salt may make him sick.
6. Don't let the dog eat any discarded fish and especially not 'blow fish' as these are highly poisonous and can be fatal.
7. Never leave a dog unattended around water and always be aware of the tides as these can be hazardous for even the best swimmers.



Heat Stroke

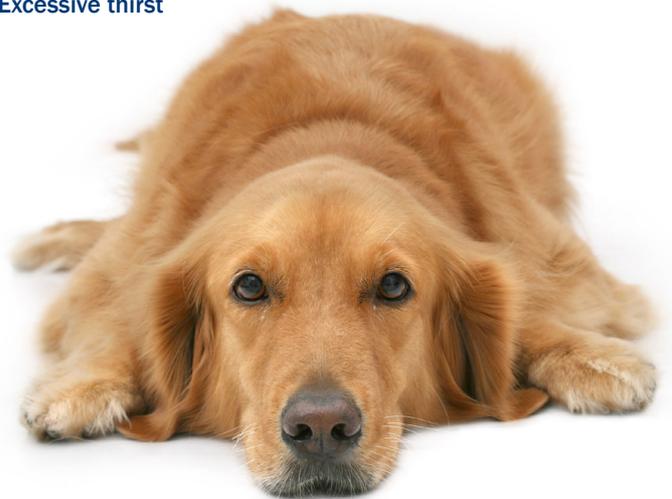
Watch out for heat stroke symptoms in your dog such as fast panting, drooling and unsteadiness on their feet. If you suspect heat stroke, take immediate action.

1. Move the dog out of the heat.
2. Cool the dog with cold wet rags or towels over the body, especially on the foot pads and around the head.
3. Do not use ice or very cold water as this can actually prevent the body's core from cooling.
4. Encourage the dog to drink cool water but don't force it into his mouth.
5. Take the dog to the vet immediately.

Symptoms of Heat Stroke in Dogs



- Elevated temperature between 40-43°C
- Vomiting and diarrhea (may be bloody)
- Unwilling or unable to get up.
- Dogs staggers while walking or appears disoriented.
- Dog collapses and/or loses consciousness
- Excessive thirst



- Excessive prolonged or recurrent panting
- Bright or dark red tongue and/or gums
- Sticky or dry tongue and or gums;
- thick saliva; may froth at mouth

