

SAFETY TIPS FOR YOUR POOCH!

Some things trouble me as I go out and about. I'm hoping that sharing my concerns will help some animals and their pet parents. Here are some ways to determine whether your dog is able to and will enjoy running with you while you run or ride your bicycle. The age of your dog is important. While there are no hard and fast rules you might check in with your vet, if your dog is over 8 years old, to help determine the dog's readiness for strenuous exercise. Some dogs develop hip problems or have some arthritis as they age. I had a pitbull I ran with until he was 14. He had lots of energy, was in great physical shape (as verified by his veterinarian) and Teddy and I did not run as fast on foot as a bicycle can go. It is recommended that you not go further than 2 miles on your bike with your dog running next to you. If it is on pavement a shorter distance is better. The pounding on something so hard can be hard on your dog's hips, knees and musculoskeletal structure, in general.

The temperature is another factor to take into consideration. I have seen many dogs being walked on pavement on these very hot days. This will burn your dog's feet. You can test the temperature by putting the back of your hand on the pavement for 7 seconds; if your hand can't take it neither can your dog's feet. You can do this little test with your bare foot too, if you're up to taking your shoe off. When it is 77 degrees outside it can be 125 degrees on the asphalt which can damage your dog's feet in 60 seconds. Please be kind to your dog.

Before running your dog or walking him/her on hot pavement be cognizant that your dog can overheat easier than you can. Dogs do not sweat; the only way they have of cooling themselves is by panting. Dogs need plenty of water because panting can dehydrate your dog very quickly. If your dog gets overheated cool him off with cool towels and cool water. Do not use ice as this can send your dog into shock or a seizure. It is best to keep your dog in a cool place and minimal exercise when it is over 75 degrees. Your dog's tongue will tell you when he is in danger of becoming overheated. The tongue will get red and expand in size as your dog gets more overheated. Check it out by looking at your dog's tongue.

Keep in mind also the size, snout length and coat length of your dog, as these factors will affect your dog's ability to enjoy a run or even just a walk, or get overheated. A chihuahua running alongside your bicycle has to take a lot more steps than your 70 pound lab. Your short snouted pug or bulldog is better off taking only very short walks when the weather is cooler. They simply can't breathe as well as the longer snouted dogs. Some dogs, such as Chows, Huskies, Sheepdogs, Golden and Labrador Retrievers have double coats which help to cool the dog in the summer and keep them warm in the winter. Many other dogs with heavy coats do not have this double coat and get super hot. Some very short haired dogs like pitbulls have little protection on very hot days.

The metal bed of your pick up will scorch and destroy your dogs feet as fast as the asphalt will. 100,000 dogs are killed annually riding in truck beds. In addition to the danger and the extremely hot metal bed the dog has hot wind and sun pounding on it. This is a recipe for great suffering and death and a guilty conscience for something that could be so easily avoided. Artificial turf, predominantly made of plastic, can quickly damage your dog's feet when the weather is warm, as it can get even hotter than asphalt. Do the same test with the back of your hand or bare foot.

In many cases your dog will be the most loyal, devoted loving friend you will ever have. They depend on you to keep them safe and look out for their well being. Treat them as the precious gift they are. You will never regret having treated your best friend well.