

Camping with your pet

By: Crystal McLeod

Summer is almost here, and for many people, that means dusting off the camping gear! The fresh air, recreational activities, camp food, campfire, and some well-deserved relaxation are all part of camping. Unfortunately, insect bites, burned or soggy camp food, lumpy beds, and bad weather conditions may also be part of the camping experience.

Some camping experiences, like a soggy campground, are just part of camping. Emergencies and accidents should not be considered routine camping. The purpose of this article is to learn how to avoid (or at least minimize) accident and emergency situations while camping.

First Aid

First Aid kits are readily available at your local pet supply store, or you can make your own. Be sure to check the kit contents regularly to make sure that nothing is out of stock or out of date. Have all contents in a seal proof container with your vet's number taped to the inside for quick reference. Some contents that are a must in your first aid kit are: scissors, tweezers, antiseptic wipes, antibiotic cream, gauze wrap, vet wrap, tape, old blankets/towels, materials for a muzzle, and thermometer.

Camp Nutrition

Camping is often a good excuse to indulge a little- s'mores by the fire and all sorts of snacks and treats that you would not normally eat at home. This is OK for humans, but not for pets. Even in the best of circumstances- at home on a steady, well-tolerated diets- pets have sensitive digestive systems. Camping, with all that activity, good food, and lack of routine can be very dangerous to pets. Ingestion of fatty foods can lead to pancreatitis, and picnic foods; such as corn on the cob may be eaten cob and all, then become lodged in the intestines. These 'dietary indiscretions' are not just a belly ache- they can quickly turn into an emergency situation. And a first Aid kit won't help in these cases, either. Prevention of "dietary indiscretion" is a must while camping.

Exercise and Fitness- Don't Overdo it!

Just like humans, pets can become out-of-shape and overweight. A common misconception about dogs is that they are always in shape and are natural athletes and swimmers. This is not always the case. Sore muscles, stiff joints, difficulty swimming, and heat exhaustion happen to pets, too.

Be aware of your pet's activity levels and do not push your pet to swim, mountain bike, hike ,etc., if they are not in excellent shape and used to the activity. Consider a pet life-jacket if water activities are on your agenda. Dogs can tire easily while swimming if they are not used to it (much like their human companions).

Miscellaneous Cautions

Loud Noise Phobias- Is your pet afraid of fireworks, thunder, or gunshot? Most campgrounds require that pets be leashed anyway, but take special care to make sure your pet is safely leashed or crated if any of the loud noises are expected. A frightened animal can become a lost and injured animal very quickly!

Insect bites and other animals- Know the potential dangers of the area you will be camping in. Bears, ticks, cougars, bees, spiders, skunks and porcupines may be threats to you, your family, and your pets.

Ask your local vet about what anti-inflammatory and anti-histamines you're allowed to give and the dosages that are appropriate to your pet.