

# PAWS FOR PETS

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Some Myths & Facts about Spaying & Neutering:

**MYTH:** *My pet will get fat and lazy.*

**FACT:** The truth is that most pets get fat and lazy because their owners feed them too much and don't give them enough exercise.

**MYTH:** *It's better to have one litter first.*

**FACT:** Medical evidence indicates just the opposite. In fact, the evidence shows that females spayed before their first heat are typically healthier. Many veterinarians now sterilize dogs and cats as young as eight weeks of age. Check with your veterinarian about the appropriate time for these procedures.

**MYTH:** *My children should experience the miracle of birth.*

**FACT:** Even if children are able to see a pet give birth—which is unlikely, since it usually occurs at night and in seclusion—the lesson they will really learn is that animals can be created and discarded as it suits adults. Instead, it should be explained to children that the real miracle is life and that preventing the birth of some pets can save the lives of others.

## AVIAN INFLUENZA-KEEPING YOUR FAMILY & YOUR PETS-SAFE & HEALTHY

By Carrie Allen

In early March, with fears of an avian influenza (bird flu) pandemic running high, some people in Europe reacted strangely to news of H5N1-infected birds in their area: They abandoned their cats.

A dead cat had been discovered on the German island of Ruegen, a site where many infected birds had also been found. Tests showed that the cat was infected with the disease, making him the first known European case of infection in a mammal.

Officials in the effected area tried to handle the news in a calm and reasonable way: They told people not to panic, and asked locals within a 2-mile radius to keep their cats indoors and their dogs leashed. But within a few days, pet guardians around the European Union (EU) were reacting fearfully, and already-crowded animal shelters began to see an influx of relinquished animals.

"We are getting calls from cat owners wanting to know if there are risks, people who are panicking and wondering what they should do with their cats, and people who are abandoning their cats," Serge Belais, president of SPA, a French animal protection society, told the Associated Press.

### On North America's Doorstep

While H5N1 has not yet reared its ugly head on American shores, some experts are predicting it will arrive here sometime this year, turning up—most expect—in a poultry farm or migratory bird population. (The virus could also make its way to the United States through other means—the illegal exotic animal trade and cockfighting among them.) If this happens, The HSUS is concerned that public fear of the virus could cause similar reactions to those in Europe and unnecessarily cost beloved family pets their homes. American families care for their pets, but a concern for the human members of their families may lead them to think that giving up their animal friends is the way to keep safe.



We're pleased to report that it's not the case. Read some of the only good news you'll hear about bird flu, and get essential safety tips for your whole family.

### The Good News about the Bad Bug

Michael Greger, M.D., Director of Public Health and Animal Agriculture in Farm Animal Welfare at The HSUS, has spent the past year studying and writing about bird flu. His book on the subject, *Bird Flu: A Virus of Our Own Hatching* will be published this summer. While Dr. Greger says the avian influenza threat is very serious, he says some scientists see a ray of hope in the fact that a major human outbreak has not yet occurred.

Some scientists think that there's something so strange about H5N1 that it may simply be impossible for the virus to pass from human to human.

If the avian influenza virus doesn't mutate into a form easily transmissible between humans, there will be no H5N1 pandemic. What we'll see here if the virus arrives on our shores is much what we've already seen in other countries: very rare sickness and death in people who work or live around chickens and other birds raised for meat, or who've otherwise come into contact with sick birds.

While we're not off the hook for a potential pandemic, it's good news for now. As Dr. Paul Offit,

## AVIAN INFLUENZA CONTINUED...

chief of infectious diseases at Children's Hospital in Philadelphia, recently told National Public Radio, "You won't have a pandemic until the virus spreads not only from person to person, but *easily* from person to person."

It's also good news for our pets: The way the virus currently spreads means you're not going to get this disease from your pets, and they're unlikely to get it from one another. As long as H5N1 maintains its current features, we can keep both our human and nonhuman family members safe.

### Hope for the Best, Prepare for the Worst

That said, if bird flu does arrive in the United States in its current, bird-to-bird and bird-to-mammal form, many people will need to make lifestyle changes in order to stay healthy and safe. Read on for smart, sane advice on how to prepare now, and how to protect yourself and your animals should bird flu arrive in your area.

## CHOOSING A BOARDING KENNEL

Need to go out of town? A boarding kennel can give your pet quality care—and can give you peace of mind. Before loading Fido or Fluffy into the car and driving over to the nearest kennel, though, it's important to find the right kennel and prepare your pet for boarding.

What are the pros and cons of using a boarding kennel?

Your pet depends on you to take good care of her—even when you have to be out of town. Friends and neighbors may not have the experience or time to properly look after your pet, particularly for longer trips. So next time you have to leave your pet behind for a while, leave pet care to the professionals, such as a pet sitter or boarding kennel.

A facility specializing in care and overnight boarding allows your pet to:

- avoid the stress of a long car or airplane ride to your destination. stay where he's welcome (unlike many hotels).
- receive more attention and supervision than he would if home alone most of the day.
- be monitored by staff trained to spot health problems.
- be secure in a kennel designed to foil canine and feline escape artists.

### Potential drawbacks to using a boarding kennel include:

- the stress related to staying in an unfamiliar environment.
- the proximity to other pets, who may expose your pet to health problems.
- the difficulty of finding a kennel that accepts pets other than dogs and cats.
- the inconvenience of the drive over, which can be especially hard on a pet easily stressed by car travel.

### How do I find a good kennel?

Ask a friend, neighbor, veterinarian, animal shelter, or dog trainer for a recommendation. You can also check the Yellow Pages under "Kennels & Pet Boarding." Once you have names—even ones you got from reliable sources—it's important to do a little background check.

First, find out whether your state requires boarding kennel inspections. If it does, make sure the kennel you are considering

displays a license or certificate showing that the kennel meets mandated standards.

Also ask whether the prospective kennel belongs to the American Boarding Kennels Association (719-667-1600), a trade association founded by kennel operators to promote professional standards of pet care. Besides requiring members to subscribe to a code of ethics, ABKA offers voluntary facility accreditation that indicates the facility has been inspected and meets ABKA standards of professionalism, safety, and quality of care.

Check, too, with your Better Business Bureau to see whether any complaints have been lodged against a kennel you are considering.

After selecting a few kennels, confirm that they can accommodate your pet for specific dates and can address your pet's special needs (if any). If you're satisfied, schedule a visit.

### What should I look for?

On your visit, ask to see all the places your pet may be taken. Pay particular attention to the following:

- Does the facility look and smell clean?
- Is there sufficient ventilation and light?
- Is a comfortable temperature maintained?
- Does the staff seem knowledgeable and caring?
- Are pets required to be current on their vaccinations, including the vaccine for canine kennel cough (Bordetella)? (Such a requirement helps protect your animal and others.)
- Does each dog have his own adequately sized indoor-outdoor run or an indoor run and a schedule for exercise?
- Are outdoor runs and exercise areas protected from wind, rain, and snow?
- Are resting boards and bedding provided to allow dogs to rest off the concrete floor?
- Are cats housed away from dogs?
- Is there enough space for cats to move around comfortably?
- Is there enough space between the litter box and food bowls?
- How often are pets fed?

## CHOOSING A BOARDING KENNEL CONTINUED....

- Can the owner bring a pet's special food?
- What veterinary services are available?
- Are other services available such as grooming, training, bathing?
- How are rates calculated?

### How do I prepare my pet?

Be sure your pet knows basic commands and is well socialized around other people and pets; if your pet has an aggression problem or is otherwise unruly, she may not be a good candidate for boarding. Before taking your animal to the kennel, make sure she is current on vaccinations.

It's also a good idea to accustom your pet to longer kennel stays by first boarding her during a short trip, such as a weekend ex-

cursion. This allows you to work out any problems before boarding your pet for an extended period.

Before you head for the kennel, double-check that you have your pet's medications and special food (if any), your veterinarian's phone number, and contact information for you and a local backup.

When you arrive with your pet at the boarding facility, remind the staff about any medical or behavior problems your pet has, such as a history of epilepsy or fear of thunder. After the check-in process, hand your pet to a staff member, say good-bye, and leave. Avoid long, emotional partings, which may upset your pet. Finally, have a good trip, knowing that your pet is in good hands and will be happy to see you when you return.

## COOL IT! SUMMER'S HEAT CAN BE DEADLY FOR YOUR PET

By Rebecca Simmons

Americans have a love affair with their cars—and their pets. During the summer months, however, the combination can be deadly.

Heatstroke might have killed a litter of kittens if Kim Intino, manager of HSUS's Animal Services Consultation Program, hadn't noticed their frantic movements while walking through a mall parking lot in upstate New York. The kittens, trapped inside a parked car on a hot, humid summer afternoon, were "literally throwing themselves against the car doors trying to get out." Their open-mouth panting and desperate attempts to escape the vehicle were signals to Intino, at the time an animal caretaker at a veterinary office, that the kittens were in real danger.

Intino immediately contacted mall security to have the owner of the vehicle paged. But before the owner arrived, Intino convinced a security guard to force the locks on the vehicle open, possibly saving the cats' lives. "Their bodies were very limp, and they were gasping for air when we got them out," she says.

The kittens were lucky. They survived. Many pets aren't so fortunate.

### The Dog Days of Summer

Common sense tells most people that leaving their pet inside a parked vehicle on a hot, summer day could be dangerous after an extended period of time. But most people don't realize that the temperature can skyrocket after just a few minutes. Parking in the shade or leaving the windows cracked does little to alleviate this pressure cooker.

On a warm, sunny day windows collect light, trapping heat inside the vehicle, and pushing the temperature inside to dangerous levels. On an 85-degree Fahrenheit day, for example, the temperature inside a car with the windows opened slightly can reach 102 degrees within ten minutes. After 30 minutes, the temperature will reach 120 degrees. At 110 degrees, pets are in danger of heatstroke. On hot and humid days, the temperature in a car parked in direct sunlight can rise more than 30 degrees per minute, and quickly become lethal.

A recent study by the Stanford University School of Medicine showed that temperatures inside cars can rise dramatically even on mild days. With outside temperatures as low as 72 degrees, researchers found that a car's interior temperature can heat up by an average of 40 degrees within an hour, with 80% of that increase in the first 30 minutes. A cracked window provides little relief from this oven effect. The Stanford researchers found that a cracked window had an insignificant effect on both the rate of heating and the final temperature after an hour.

Pets, more so than humans, are susceptible to overheating. While people can roll down windows, turn on the air conditioner or exit the vehicle when they become too hot, pets cannot. And pets are much less efficient at cooling themselves than people are.

Dogs, for example, are designed to conserve heat. Their sweat glands, which exist on their nose and the pads of their feet, are inadequate for cooling during hot days. Panting and drinking water helps cool them, but if they only have overheated air to breathe, dogs can suffer brain and organ damage after just 15 minutes. Short-nosed breeds, like pugs and bulldogs, young pets, seniors or pets with weight, respiratory, cardiovascular or other health problems are especially susceptible to heat-related stress.

### Pets on the Move

While it used to be that our animals stayed home to guard the couch, increasingly dogs, cats and other pets are going along for the ride, whether tagging along during errands or putting in major mileage during the family vacation. The high number of animals on the road means that awareness and vigilance are essential for protecting pets from parking-lot peril. Help spread the word by



## COOL IT! CONTINUED...

following these tips:

- Remind friends to keep their pets at home during the summer months if they'll be going anywhere pets are not allowed.
- Educate others by distributing posters or by leaving brochures on windshields. The HSUS has posters, available for a nominal fee (\$3 for 10/ \$5 for 25), that store managers can post inside their windows to remind shoppers that "Leaving Your Pet in a Parked Car Can Be a Deadly Mistake." Similar, 4" x 9" hot car flyers are also available (50 for \$3) at the address below. For a sample brochure, send a SASE to HSUS/Hot Cars, 2100 L St., NW, Washington, D.C. 20037.
- Get involved. If you see a pet in a parked car during a summer day, go to the nearest store and have the owner paged. Enlist the help of a local police officer or security guard or call the local police department and animal control office.

Deb Antoniades, of Monroe County, New York is an animal lover who not only keeps her own pets at home when the temperatures rise, but who is vigilant about keeping other animals safe as well. "I keep a stack of photocopies in my glove compartment of an article about the dangers of leaving a dog in your car in the summer—even with the windows open. I leave [the articles] under the windshield wiper of any car I notice with a dog left inside. I've called 911 a couple of times as well."

### Taking Action

In case of an emergency, it's important to be able to identify the symptoms of heat stress caused by exposure to extreme temperatures. Check the animal for signs of heavy panting, glazed eyes, a rapid heartbeat, restlessness, excessive thirst, lethargy, fever, dizziness, lack of coordination, profuse salivation, vomiting, a deep red or purple tongue, and unconsciousness.

If the animal shows symptoms of heatstroke, take steps to gradually lower her body temperature immediately. Follow these tips, and it could save her life:

- Move the animal into the shade or an air-conditioned area.
- Apply ice packs or cold towels to her head, neck, and chest or immerse her in cool (not cold) water.
- Let her drink small amounts of cool water or lick ice cubes.
- Take her directly to a veterinarian.

In many states, it's against the law to leave a pet unattended in a parked vehicle in a manner that endangers the health or safety of the animal. Despite these laws, not to mention a basic common sense that should guide most pet owners during the summer, companion animals die every year from heatstroke. The worst part is knowing that each death was preventable. That's why sharing this information is so important. Summers, after all, are truly supposed to be carefree.

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## FREE KIT: PROVIDING FOR YOUR PET'S FUTURE WITHOUT YOU



Because pets usually have shorter life spans than their human caregivers, you may have planned for your animal friend's passing. But what if you are the one who becomes ill or incapacitated, or who dies first? As a responsible pet owner, you provide your pet with food and water, shelter, veterinary care, and love. To ensure that your beloved pet will continue to receive this care should something unexpected happen to you, it's critical to plan ahead.

Learn what steps you can take to plan and provide for your pet's future without you by following the links below. The HSUS also offers a free kit, "Providing for Your Pet's Future Without You," complete with a six-page fact sheet, wallet alert cards, emergency decals for windows and doors, and caregiver information forms. For the full kit, please write to [petsinwills@hsus.org](mailto:petsinwills@hsus.org) or The HSUS, Humane Legacy, 2100 L Street NW, Washington, DC 20037, or call 202-452-1100.

*NOTE: The following information is intended to provide a general overview and to stimulate your thinking about providing for your pet in the event of your incapacity or death. It is not intended to provide legal advice and is definitely not a substitute for consulting a local attorney of your choosing who is familiar both with the laws of your state and with your personal circumstances and needs, and those of your pets.*

## IF THE BIRD FLU ARRIVES: SAFETY TIPS FOR YOUR FAMILY & PETS



If bird flu comes to your part of the world, there are some basic steps you can take to keep your whole family safe and healthy.

- Stay up to date on breaking bird flu news through national news coverage and the web sites listed below.
- Get in the habit of exercising good personal hygiene. Wash your hands with soap and water regularly, and especially before eating and handling food. Cover your nose and mouth when you sneeze or cough. Encourage kids to do the same.
- If you eat chicken, make sure it's handled and prepared in such a way that eliminates the possibility of cross-contamination and is thoroughly cooked.
- Be prepared for a pandemic. As is the case for any disaster, making an individual and family plan is essential.

### CATS

- Cats can become infected with H5N1.
- Keep pet cats indoors. This will keep cats from stalking wild birds and from bringing home dead bird "treats."
- Do not feed cats raw chicken.
- The virus can pass from cat to cat; be cautious about handling stray cats in H5N1-affected areas, and do not let your own cats come in contact with strays. Contact your local animal shelter, animal control agency, or feral cat organization for assistance with stray cats.
- Do not touch sick or dead stray cats. Report sick or dead cats to a local veterinarian, your community's health department, or animal control.
- Consult a veterinarian if your cat shows signs of breathing trouble or nasal discharge.
- Include your cat in planning for a pandemic. Have extra supplies of your cat's food and any medications.



### DOGS

- It is not clear whether dogs are susceptible to the virus, but it is advisable to take precautions.
- When taking dogs outside, keep them restrained on a leash.
- Make sure contact between dogs and wild birds or poultry (or their feces) is avoided; don't let dogs pick up dead birds or other animals.
- Include your dog in planning for a pandemic. Have extra supplies of your dog's food and any medications.

### PET BIRDS

- Pet birds can become infected with H5N1 if they are exposed to infected birds or their secretions.
- Keep pet birds indoors and do not allow them to have any contact with wild birds.
- Do not introduce new birds into your home. If you do so, make sure they are first quarantined and tested for bird flu. Make sure everyone who touches your birds or maintains their cages has clean hands, clothes, and shoes (so that they don't accidentally track the germs from wild birds into your home).
- Don't share contaminated supplies or housing with other bird owners.
- Include your bird in planning for a pandemic. Have extra supplies of your bird's food and any medications.



### WILD BIRDS

- If you maintain a backyard bird feeder or bath, don't let kids or pets come in contact with it or with the surrounding areas.
- Wear gloves when you clean the bath or refill the feeder and wash your hands afterward.
- Avoid physical contact with wild birds and their byproducts (i.e. feathers, feces).
- Keep children and pets away from wild birds too, and avoid areas contaminated with wild bird secretions.