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Humane Society of Berks County Announces “Hot Dog Line” During Heat Wave to Report Dogs in Danger

The Humane Society of Berks County, Berks County’s leader in animal welfare, issued an urgent warning to pet owners in Berks County in advance of the extreme heat warning in effect for the entire region. Dogs are at particular risk of heat related health issues, particularly outside dogs. The Humane Society strongly urges pet owners to take some precautions to help their dogs avoid illness, injury, or death as a result of the extreme temperatures. “It is the responsibility of dog owners to ensure the safety of their pets during this heat wave,” said Humane Society executive director, Karel I. Minor. “We want to help pet owners and we want to make sure people know where to turn if they see a dog in distress.”

To help ensure that dogs in heat distress receive help swiftly, the Humane Society has announced a “Hot Dog Line” during the heat wave. This “hot line” can be called by the public if they see or know of a dog in acute distress because of the heat. Because dogs can rapidly, and fatally, succumb to the heat, a speedy response is vital. People wishing to report a dog in distress can reach the Humane Society’s “Hot Dog Line” by dialing 610-921-2348 and pressing “1”. This will allow them to directly reach a trained Animal Protective Services Officer, 24 hours a day. In the event that the officers are in the field rescuing other animals, the “Hot Dog Line” will page an officer, who will return the call within 15 minutes.

A rapid response can be a matter of life and death. “Dogs cannot thermo-regulate as well as humans,” said Dr. Lee Pickett, veterinarian and writer of the syndicated column, *Ask The Vet’s Pets*. “This can result in a body temperature increase that may lead to death. Even if their body temperature does not rise to fatal levels, serious complications such as organ failure can occur.” Dr. Pickett says that some dogs are at particular risk in the heat. “Owners of young and old dogs, flat faced and arctic breeds, and dogs with underlying medical conditions, particularly heart conditions, should be especially careful and conscious of the danger,” Dr. Pickett also reminds pet owners that **all** pets, including cats, pet birds, rabbits, and other small animals are at risk for heat related illness or injury.

Prevention is the best and easiest way to avoid health problems. If possible, bring all pets inside during hot weather. All pets should have access to clean, cool water at all times. Pets that must remain outside should have shaded shelter and be checked on regularly. Heavy panting, glazed eyes, a rapid pulse, unsteadiness, a staggering gait, vomiting, or a deep red or purple tongue can be signs of heat stress. Any pet owner whose pet is displaying these symptoms should take the animal to a veterinarian **immediately**- it could save the pet’s life. Anyone who sees these symptoms in neighbor’s pet should immediately notify both the pet owner and the Humane Society of Berks County by calling the “Hot Dog Line”. Owners who refuse or neglect to provide proper hot weather relief could be subject to prosecution for animal cruelty.

The Humane Society of Berks County serves all of Berks County and surrounding communities, sheltering 7,000 animals each year. It is a private, non-profit organization funded through donations and service fees. In addition to enforcing Pennsylvania’s animal cruelty laws, the Humane Society offers adoption services, spay and neuter services, humane education, pet behavioral counseling, and helps stray, injured and mistreated animals. The Humane Society of Berks County is located at 1801 N. 11th Street, Reading.

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