

Homeward Bound Golden Retriever Rescue

Golden Rule Training

Protect the Paws this summer!

Almost everyone has experienced the unpleasant sensation of standing on a very hot road. How many of us realize the road can be just as dangerous and painful for our dogs? Hot pavement, debris and grasses can burn and injure a dog's paws.

Those of us who are dog lovers want to take our dogs along on outings; however, the summer months can be dangerous for dogs. Walking on HOT pavement, gravel, dirt, blacktop, driveways, streets and parking lots can get really hot and burn your dog's paw pads. This also includes the back of a pick-up truck (which we do not recommend you put your dog in the back of a truck, ever!), a boat dock, or any metal surface gets hot and the pads of your dog's feet need to be protected from burns and blisters.

The pads can also get injured from broken glass and other debris while you're out on walks. Also, watch out for foxtails this summer; these dried grasses can penetrate into a dog's paw and other areas. There are several great ways to keep your dog's feet protected from the scorching summer temperatures and still take your dog with you!

Other Facts about Paws

Paws not only get her from place to place, they also help regulate body temperature. Dogs breathe through their feet and cool themselves through the middle sections of their pads (and their tongue).

Extreme elements can cause severe injury on dog paws, such as hot pavement, hot sand, sharp bits of ice, or chemicals used to melt the frozen water, so it is essential to take care in protecting dog's paws. While winter cold and summer heat often mean extra care of dog paws, it is necessary to protect the animal's feet year-round. For example, dogs that frequently run around parks or in your backyard can pick up small pebbles between paw pads or cut their pads on sharp twigs or rocks.

How to Deal with Injuries

Signs of burned pads include:

- limping or refusing to walk
- licking or chewing at the feet
- pads darker in color
- missing part of pad
- blisters or redness
- whining and or heavy panting may be a sign of pain



In an emergency

If your dog experiences any of these symptoms, the best treatment is to immediately flush the injured paw with cool water, get the dog to a grassy area, and carry him/her if possible.

It is important to keep the foot area cool and clean. As soon as you notice the problem, flush the pads with cool water or a cool compress if available. Get the dog to a grassy area, or if possible, carry him.

As soon as possible, the dog should be checked by a veterinarian. The veterinarian will determine if the dog needs pain medication and/or antibiotics.

HOW TO TREAT INJURED PAWS

Only if you cannot get the dog to a veterinarian right away, if a heat-related foot pad injury does occur, owners should take the following measures to prevent infection in the dog's injured paw:

Wash the dog's injured paw pad using antibacterial soap and rinse thoroughly. Pat the injured foot with a clean towel to dry the area.

Pour an antiseptic like beta dine (preferred) or hydrogen peroxide over the burned, blistered or cut paw pad and allow the liquid to air dry. (Note: Hydrogen peroxide can damage tissue and delay healing. After the initial cleaning, hydrogen peroxide must be used at half-strength, with 50% water added. This is why beta dine is preferred.) *Do not use alcohol, it burns!*

Apply a generous amount of antibiotic ointment to the site of the dog's foot pad injury. Wrap the paw and ankle with rolled gauze. Roll the gauze in a "figure 8" pattern, looping around the paw and ankle to prevent the bandage from slipping off.

Cover the bandage with a sock, placing a bit of tape around the dog's leg at the sock's ankle to hold the sock in place. The sock will prevent soiling of the foot bandage.

Bring the dog to the veterinarian for an examination! Antibiotics are often prescribed for a paw pad cut, burn or sore due to the high risk of infection.

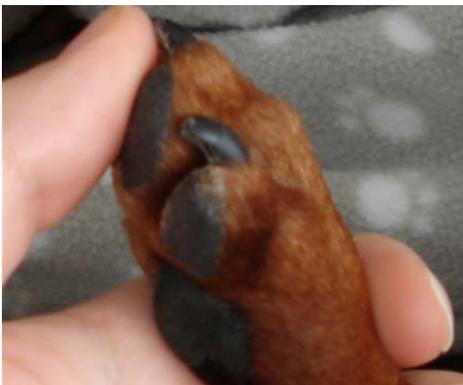
Typically, bandaging is not recommended for a dog's injury as the limited air flow can promote the growth of anaerobic bacteria. But paw pad injuries are an exception to this rule, as without a bandage, the injured paw pad will be contaminated with bacteria and irritated by debris.

Paw pad burns and cuts are very prone to infection, so visiting the veterinarian is very important. A more thorough cleaning may need to be performed under anesthesia; removal of dead tissue may also be necessary to allow for healing to occur. Antibiotics are often required for complete healing; a visit to the vet is even more vital when more than one paw is involved, which is often the case with foot pad burns.

Prevention is the Key

Dog owners can take many precautions to prevent burns and injury to a dog's paw pads. Some of these preventative measures are designed to prevent pad injuries will also make the dog less vulnerable to other summertime pet dangers, like canine heat stroke and sunburn. Here are some ideas to protect your dog:

- Walk the dog in the early morning or evening to avoid paw pad burns. Avoid walking the dog in the heat of the day, when the sun beats down, heating the pavement and sand.
- Walk the dog on the grass. The grass remains cooler than the sidewalk, lessening a dog's chance of paw pad injuries in the summer. This makes a trip to a shady park a good option for an afternoon walk in the summertime.
- Take frequent dog walks on the pavement during cool times of day. This will help toughen a dog's paw pads by promoting the formation of callus. This makes the skin of the dog's foot pads thicker and less prone to injuries like burns and cuts. Dogs that seldom walk on pavement will have more sensitive pads and they require more frequent nail clippings, as walking on pavement files the dog's nails.



Moisturize the dog's paws on a daily basis. Keep a dog's paws well moisturized with Vaseline® or a special paw pad balm or cream, like Musher's Secret®. Moisturizing the dog's paw pads will prevent cracking, peeling and minor pad cuts. These injuries will cause the dog's pads to become more sensitive once healing is complete, so preventing injury is the key.

A wet towel can also be useful for the dog to stand on while loading him/her into the car.

- Feel the pavement before you take your dog for a walk. If the pavement is extremely hot to the touch, it will be extremely hot on your dog's paw pads.
- Keep the hair trimmed around your dog's paws to prevent ice, snow, salt, de-icing chemicals, pebbles, sand, small twigs and other debris from attaching to longer hairs.
- Brush the hair with a comb before trimming, and don't forget to get the hair between the toes, as well hair as between the toes and the main paw pad. Ice and other debris can easily become stuck in these areas.
- Take your dog to your veterinarian or a professional groomer to have her nails trimmed regularly. Overgrown nails can interfere with your dog's gait and can split, causing pain and bleeding. Severe cases can curl under and grow into the pad of the paw.
- Inspect your dog's paws daily after following any outdoor adventure; small pebbles and other items can become lodged between your dog's paw pads.

- Do not put booties on your dog; dogs breathe through their feet and cool themselves through the in between of their pads and their tongue. If you put booties on them, you shut down more than half of their ability to cool themselves.
- A dog that has been in the water for a while is more easily injured due to pads that have been softened.
- Never take an animal to the beach unless you can provide a shaded spot and plenty of fresh water for her to drink. Rinse her off after she has been in salt water.
- Always provide plenty of shade for an animal staying outside the house. A properly constructed dog house serves best. Bring your dog or cat inside during the heat of the day and let her rest in a cool part of your house. Always provide plenty of cool, clean water for your animal.
- Please be sensitive to old and overweight animals in hot weather. Brachycephalic (snub-nosed) dogs (especially bulldogs, Pekingese, Boston terriers, Lhasa apsos and shih tzus) and those with heart or lung diseases should be kept indoors in air-conditioning as much as possible.

Products that can Help

Products such as Musher's Secret ® are a dense, barrier wax that forms a breathable bond with your dog's paws. Developed in Canada for use with sledding dogs, it provides tenacious protection even in the most extreme conditions (using this product helps, it does not protect from extreme heat, all other precautions mentioned above apply).

Self Cooling Pet Pad or a Reusable Ice Mat can help keep your pooches comfortable and safe!

Applying a good sun block is always a good idea, especially on their nose and ears and doubly so if they are a short-haired breed. I like to cover my dog's face when spraying on his body, and then spraying in my hand, to apply to his nose, ears and face.

Always have fresh water available; if traveling carry water and a no-spill water dish for your dog.

http://inventorspot.com/articles/10_hot_products_keep_your_pets_cool_5991

http://www.northcoastpets.com/cooling_products.htm

Foxtails are also dangerous for your Dog!

Foxtails are another danger to be aware of this summer; these are grasses with seed awns that are extremely dangerous to dogs. Foxtails have razor-sharp needles and can burrow into a dog's skin and enter soft tissue (paws, eyes, nose, rear end and under-belly) where they can cause serious injury, infection and even death.



Once the foxtail begins traveling through the body, they do not break down. A foxtail in a dog's ear can perforate an ear drum. In a paw, it can lacerate the pad and move into the limb. In the nose and mouth, foxtails can eventually migrate towards the lungs.

Care must be taken especially with long-haired dogs, like Golden Retrievers! Their fur picks up all kinds of debris easily. If you hike with your dog, make sure you check the paws thoroughly when you get home.

The greatest foxtail problem occurs in California! The grasses most often invade disturbed sites. Like a weed, they grow at roadsides, landfills, fence rows, open fields, mountain trails, vacant lots and sometimes lawns.



The best way to protect your dog is to stay out of areas with foxtails!

Symptoms

If a dog has a foxtail lodged in between toes, in nostrils or ear canals they may start sneezing and pawing at the affected area. Sometimes the foxtail is not easily visible (if ingested or inhaled), other times there will be visible wounds.



Signs of imbedded Foxtails include:

- excessive sneezing (foxtail in nose)
 - a lump on skin that is painful to touch
 - violent shaking of head (foxtail in ear)
 - pawing at eye
 - discharge from area on skin
 - visible abscess
- bacterial infection

Wherever the foxtail is located, once it's through the skin of a dog it should be examined by your veterinarian to make sure the entire foxtail is removed.

Myths and Facts about Summer Safety:

[MYTH: Spraying my dog with water will keep them cool.](#)

FACT: A dog's skin is like a wetsuit. They do not have pores or experience evaporative cooling like we do. If the water you spray on them is cold, they will feel the coolness initially. But, since they don't feel evaporative coolness, in a few moments or minutes it will feel like a wet blanket to them.

Instead: While too much time in the sun should be avoided, summer swims are great exercise!

MYTH: It's okay to leave my dog in the car if I provide water, park in the shade and/or leave the window open.

FACT: The temperature of a car interior can easily hit 15–30 degrees hotter than the outdoor summer temperature in a matter of minutes. **Yes, even with the windows open!** Don't risk it!

Instead: Leave your furry friend home where it's cool unless you can take them inside with you WITHOUT walking across a hot parking lot.

MYTH: Dog's feet are tough and don't burn on hot pavement.

FACT: Dog's feet burn! Hold your bare hand or foot on all walking surfaces (pavement, sand, dirt as well as asphalt) for 5 seconds. If it's too hot to hold your skin there, you will hurt your beloved pet if you force them to stand or walk on it. Their pads could burn and even blister.

TIP: Start checking surfaces around an 80 degree air temperature, as the ground gets surprisingly hot even when the air is comfortable.

Instead: Walk your dog early in the morning, or later in the evening when the sun goes down.

MYTH: Dogs can cool themselves through their mouths no matter what the temperature.

FACT: A dog's internal temperature ranges from 99 degrees to 101.5 degrees. If the external temperature is greater than their internal temperature, panting no longer serves as a cooling device. For example, if you leave your dog outside in the shade or even take them for a run on the grass when it's 99 degrees outside, depending on your canine's temperature, they will not only suffer, but could develop serious problems, and in some cases even death.

Instead: See these websites for cooling dog products:

http://inventorspot.com/articles/10_hot_products_keep_your_pets_cool_5991

http://www.northcoastpets.com/cooling_products.htm

MYTH: Cutting my pooches hair short will keep them cool.

FACT: This varies from pet to pet depending on coat length. But, it is important to know that dog's fur serves as an insulation from the sun and heat...as well as the cold. So, to give a sheepdog a cute puppy cut, may actually cause them to burn and overheat, if it's cut too short.

TIP: Apply a good sun block on their nose and ears, especially for a short-haired breed. Try a sunscreen with a spray; cover the dog's face with one hand and spraying his body with the other. Also spray the sunscreen in your hand to apply to his nose, ears and face.

MYTH: Spraying my dog with water will keep them cool.

FACT: Dog's do not have pores like we do, if the water you spray on them is cold, they will feel the coolness initially. But, since they don't feel evaporative coolness (lack of pores) in a few moments or minutes it will feel like a wet blanket to them.

TIP: While extended daytime exposure should be avoided, summer swims are a great form of exercise!

Sources:

How to Protect Your Dog's Paws From Hot Pavement | eHow.com

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Janet Tobiassen Crosby, DVM, Foot pad burns may be a hard-to-see injury

6 Super Simple Facts To Keep Your Dog Healthy And Happy This Summer;

<http://suite101.com/article/dog-paw-pad-injuries-in-summer-heat-a132765>

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