

Water Safety For Your K-9 Kids

By Eileen Proctor, Top Dog

Elly May Clampett (of 1960s Beverly Hillbillies fame) was a gal after my own heart. She was, perhaps, a pioneer of the now popular activity of sharing the "cee-ment pond" with furry friends. Yes, a dip in the pool is a great way for us... and our hot dogs... to cool down during the oppressive Arizona summer heat. But it's important to keep these important pet-friendly water safety tips in mind before diving in:

- ✦ Although many dogs love the water, don't assume they can naturally swim. You may need to spend some time teaching your dog how to stay afloat and maneuver himself in an unfamiliar setting. Because it may be difficult for your dog to climb the slick sides of a pool and lift himself out, pools with built-in steps or a beachfront style entry are the safest.
- ✦ Keep in mind that even excellent swimmers will gradually lose their ability as they age and become weaker. In addition, puppies and senior dogs are more prone to slipping and, therefore, falling into a pool. Never allow your dog to swim unsupervised or throw a dog into a pool; he may panic.
- ✦ Make sure the water's chemical balance is correct. Your pet can get sick if he drinks highly chlorinated water or is exposed to the green algae that can invade your pool. Chlorinated water may irritate your dog's eyes and skin. After swimming, hose your dog down with fresh water to flush out the chlorine.
- ✦ To avoid ear infections, carefully dry the ear canal with cotton balls after every swimming session.
- ✦ The funky smell that magically materializes around the neck area following your dog's swimfest, is most probably a reaction to his wet collar lying against his wet fur. This can be avoided by removing his regular collar during pool time (replacing it immediately once he is completely dry) or designating a special pool collar which is used only during dog-paddling (be sure to hose it down and dry it thoroughly between uses).
- ✦ Consider purchasing a floating pool alarm device to alert you if the surface of the pool is disturbed. Optimally, it should be audible both outside and inside your home.
- ✦ Your best defense against accidents is a see-through pool fence or barrier. The gate should be self-closing and self-locking; keep the gate closed at all times, even if you only leave the pool for a few minutes. Because many pets can nose open doors, make sure there is no gap between the door jam or sliding glass door runner and the door itself.

Don't have a pool? You can provide a fun and cooling environment by filling a small wading pool with water. Be sure there is just enough water to play in. The water depth should never come over your dog's head. Do not allow the water to get too hot, become stagnant, or be used as a drinking source.

Alternatively, a lawn oscillator or a spray from a hose can help cool down your canine. To get your dog used to the hose, start by trickling a small amount of water on the feet and gently move up until your pet gets used to the water. Never blast water at a dog that is not used to the hose. Be sure to empty the hose after each use so there is no water trapped within it left to heat up. Let the water flow for as long as it takes to ensure it is cool enough to safely contact your dog's skin without burning him.