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## **Summer Health Tips around Water**

Summer is the time for swimming fun in Minnesota. A few precautions can make your summer a safe one.

### **Algal Blooms**

Minnesota lakes can have harmful algal blooms that produce toxins, which can make you and your pet sick. The algae typically grow in lakes with poor water quality and will look like green paint, pea soup or thick green cake. In these situations, water clarity is low, less than 1 foot. If the lake water looks like this, avoid contact and prevent pets from swimming or drinking the water. The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency has more information about algal blooms on their website.

### **Leptospirosis**

Leptospirosis is a bacteria shed in the urine of wild animals. This bacteria pools in rivers, lakes, streams, ponds and muddy areas. Pets can be infected with Leptospirosis from drinking infected water, contacting infected water with their skin or by eating a wild animal that was infected. Pets that contact standing water or roam in rural areas are at highest risk. This bacteria can cause a wide variety of symptoms from vomiting to muscle soreness, and in severe cases it can lead to kidney and liver failure. There are tests available to diagnose Leptospirosis. Since the signs vary and are similar to other diseases, your veterinarian will probably do general blood, urinalysis, x-rays and other tests, which test for many different diseases/illnesses, before they specifically test for Leptospirosis. Once diagnosed, Leptospirosis can be treated with antibiotics. If pets are caught early, recovery can be good. However, in more advanced cases, permanent organ damage may have already occurred. Vaccination is simple, affordable and the best defense against Leptospirosis. Dogs at risk should be vaccinated yearly.

### **Ear Infections**

In the summer time, ear infections are common in dogs. Water travels into the ear canal, which causes a moist environment that allows bacteria and yeast to multiply. A good precaution for your pet is to clean your pet's ears with a pet labeled ear cleaner after swimming or bathing in the summer. If your pet is swimming for a couple days over the weekend, bathe them and clean the ears at the end of the weekend. Choose a pet ear cleaner that is also labeled to be a drying solution. To clean your pet's ear, fill the ear canals with liquid, massage the ear and wipe out excess liquid and debris with a cotton ball. A certified veterinary technician can also show you how to clean their ears properly.

### **Swimming Fatigue**

Your pet may want to swim all day, but you will have to decide when it is enough swimming. Pets that are older, out of shape, obese, or have heart disease should only be allowed to swim for short periods at a time. Along with general muscle soreness, if allowed to overdo it, some pets can strain muscles, including those attached to the tail. The tail is used as a rudder during swimming. A strained tail will be held limp, and a pet may act painful when the tail is touched. This condition is known as 'swimmers tail' or 'limber tail'. Your veterinarian can prescribe pain medication until your pet's muscles heal.