

Canine Spring Safety Tips

Q Now that Spring is here, I am eager to spend more time outside with my dog. I plan to take her on long walks, hikes, to dog parks, dog-friendly cafes and to play fetch in our backyard. What can I do to keep her safe outdoors?

● Arden Moore ● Steve Brooks

YOUR BEST WORKOUT BUDDY, HIKING PARTNER AND TRAVEL MATE IS YOUR DOG, PAWS DOWN.

As a certified master pet first aid/CPR instructor, I travel the country with Pet Safety Dog Kona to help pet parents like you enjoy the great outdoors with your dog in a safe way.

For starters, make sure your dog is up-to-date on her flea and tick preventives as Spring's warm temperatures bring out these pesky pests in droves. Also book an appointment with your veterinarian for your dog to receive her annual leptospirosis vaccination. Wildlife such as squirrels, raccoons and rabbits can carry this hardy bacterial disease and pass it on to your dog through their feces and urine they deposit in your backyard. When your dog goes out for a backyard potty break, his paws can pick up these bacteria.

If you like to garden, keep your dog's safety in mind by planting dog-safe plants. Steer clear of plants poisonous to canines, particularly tulips and lilies. Make sure the mulch you use does not contain cocoa, an extremely toxic substance to dogs.

Keep your dog safe by doing weekly checks in your backyard for any signs of bees or wasps creating hives or nests. Some dogs, like people, are allergic to bee and wasp stings and may go into anaphylactic shock. Keep a pack of antihistamine in gel cap forms handy so you can quickly give to your dog en route to the veterinary clinic if he shows signs of having trouble breathing.

On your walks around the neighborhood or longer hikes, get in the habit of bringing bottled water and a collapsible, light-weight doggy water bowl. I fit them in a portable pack that fits around my waist for outings with Kona and Bujeau. Just like us, our dogs need to stay hydrated. So, aim to take a water break for the both of you about every mile. Pay attention to your dog. If he starts to hesitate, pant heavily or sweat through his paw pads, these are signs he is at risk for heat stroke. Do not let your dog take a drink from puddles as they may be contaminated and can cause giardia and other digestive upsets in your dog.

Spring is here – time to enjoy it safely with your dog! 🐾

ARDEN MOORE hosts the *Oh Behave* weekly radio show on Pet Life Radio.com and is founder of the Pet First Aid 4U. Learn more at www.ardenmoore.com.

RECOMMEND LEARNING POLICIES AND LAWS BEFORE VENTURING ON AN OUT-DOOR EXCURSION ...

practice K9 training with an emphasis on loose-leash walking and “coming when called”. On hikes, use a harness or collar that won't slip off, like a Martingale collar and 6-foot leash (required by law in most cities and states). While passing other dogs, try to hug the side of the trail that allows the humans to pass while keeping dogs on the opposite side — safely apart. If legally permitted and when confident my (microchipped) dog “comes” when called, I let them off leash on a hiking trail but *never* out of site. When a fellow dog walker approaches, I call my dog and hook the leash until the path is clear.

Play at a park burns energy but not all dogs actually like dog parks – watch for fear and avoidance behaviors like hiding behind their human, tail tucked or ears back. Playtime with a neutral-tailed, loose body doggie is great, but dominant humping, face biting, or if one dog is IN distress means it's time for you to step in. Dog parks put your pooch at greater risk of intestinal parasites, coughs, flu, sore muscles, and even fights — if you spot a dog with a high, erect tail, hard stare, bullying other dogs or being ignored by their human, it's time to leave.

Canine Cafe Manners: Teach a down/stay, provide physical or mental stimulation and a potty break prior to taking your pup to an outdoor café. Never tie your dog to the table or chairs; instead, place the end of the leash around your wrist. Check for toxic crumbs and ask your dog to down/stay when the server comes to your table. Bring a mat for your dog to lay on and have fresh water available.

Carry a walking stick and beware of mountain lions, bears waking from a winter slumber, birds of prey or coyotes roaming. Fill a backpack with doggie booties, life vest, sunglasses, sunscreen, water container to avoid overheating, treat pouch, favorite toy, poop bags and canine first aid kit.

Remember to enjoy the outdoors and take time to smell the flowers!

Spring's in the air, your dog is aware.

Flowers in bloom, birds singing tunes.

Kids flying kites, skateboards and bikes.

Long days before dark.

Walks, hikes ... dog parks.

Canine spring safety tips I shall bark!

— Steve Brooks 🐾

STEVE BROOKS (CPDT-KA), Certified Professional Dog Trainer (CPDT/KA), Canine Behavioral Expert and author of *DOG BITES* with STEVE BROOKS, shares 20 years of training techniques using “dog bites” as rewards for good behavior. SteveBrooksK9U.com