

# Safety Under the Sun

*Effective summer safety campaigns will help pet retailers increase profits while protecting their customers' canine companions.*

**T**oday, selling pet products often includes helping customers solve their problems. Successful pet retailers act as consultants who recognize seasonal concerns and highlight how the products and services they sell can help clients keep their pets healthy and happy. With the return of summer, customers and their dogs are spending more time outside. These increased outdoor activities can lead to a variety of animal safety issues. By incorporating summertime pet tips into their retail program, pet stores will be able to educate consumers about health and safety concerns, as well as sell more products effectively.

## REPLACE FAULTY EQUIPMENT

After a long winter, leashes and collars are not necessarily in the best shape. Frayed and worn leashes and collars have to be thrown away and replaced, so why not be instrumental in the process? Consider having a summer leash and collar fitting on a Saturday afternoon.

## KEEP PETS COOL

As the temperature increases, dogs feel the heat. Remind customers that outdoor shelters can provide relief from extreme temperatures. Present a variety of dog houses with different price points, and make sure that staff members can not only talk about the practical attributes of each, but also the aesthetic value. Also encourage clients to consider outdoor dog beds for their pet's comfort.

The most important summer safety advice for dog owners is to always provide fresh, drinking water. Inform customers how important it is to hydrate their dogs throughout the day, wherever they are. This is especially necessary

for snubbed nose or flat-faced dogs such as pugs.

## PARASITE PROTECTION

According to Jill Richardson, DVM of The Hartz Mountain Corporation, "Maintaining a regular flea and tick program is a necessity in the summer months, and in many cases, depending on the climate, all year round."

Mention to all customers that putting their dog on a flea and tick program is essential because parasites can not only harm their pooch, but also affect their homes and health. This is especially true in wooded and beach environments, as well as areas of the country with lots of rain.

Consider moving flea and tick shampoos to a prominent shelf at eye level. Since flea and tick product labels are sometimes confusing or intimidating to customers, have a staff member available who can distinguish these products and explain ingredients. Train staff members to recommend additional products that treat places where dogs spend a lot of time.

## REGULAR GROOMING

Even in the summer months it is important for dog owners to keep their dogs well groomed. Liz Rock of Grooming Unlimited in Huntington, N.Y., discourages clients from shaving

their dogs' fur down in the warmer weather. "Some of my clients would rather not have to bother with maintaining their dog's coat for the summer months, but I explain to them that the dog's coat offers protection from the sun. As a health alternative, I suggest that they clip their dog's hair shorter than its regular style and continue with grooming appointments every four to six weeks."

Pet stores that do not offer grooming services should encourage clients to purchase gentle, soothing and cleansing shampoos because dogs that prefer to cool off in ponds or pools will need a quick bath to prevent skin problems. Additionally, emphasize that regular brushing keep leaves, dirt and other debris from a dog's coat, and also helps to keep a clean home.



## POOL SAFETY

Sag Harbor, N.Y., is a small beach community that, in the summer months, becomes a Hamptons-lifestyle destination. As the owner of Harbor Pets, Alan Fruitstone recognizes his clients' needs and displays doggy life preservers and other aquatic equipment for canines in the front of the store. He says, "It is not surprising if clients come in for food or grooming services and leave with pool accessories that will save their dog's life."

### **CANINE TRAVEL**

According to the Travel Industry Association, 14 percent of all U.S. adults (approximately 29 million Americans) travel with their pets. Among adults traveling with pets, dogs are the most common animal brought on road trips. Nearly eight in ten travelers (76 percent) take a trip with their dog in an automobile.

Pet-friendly destinations are on the rise. To take advantage of this trend, create a special pet travel area, including airline-approved carriers, crates and car accessories. Also consider placing pet travel information at the register.

### **EMERGENCY PREPARATION**

Warmer weather means dogs and their owners spend more time outdoors on town streets and in city parks. Customers should always be aware of the presence of dangers such as glass wherever they frolick with their dogs. Have store staff encourage clients to purchase first-aid kits and books on related subjects; and, if space permits, consider having the local American Red Cross teach a pet first-aid course on the premises. **PB**

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