

TOP TIPS FOR A HAPPY AND HEALTHY DOG THIS SUMMER

with TV vet, Girish Thakral, Partner, Blacks Vets, BVSc & AH Cert VC MRCVS



Here at Blacks, it doesn't seem like five minutes ago that we were preparing for our big screen debut on Channel 4's The Job Interview. Some of you may remember our MD Tracey and Practice Manager, Val, being filmed recruiting a new receptionist for our flagship Accredited Veterinary Hospital in Dudley. We were delighted to find not one, but three, brilliant applicants and were pleased to be able to offer them all roles within the company. Emily, Nicola and David will all be celebrating their one year anniversary with us this summer. Congratulations guys!

So, when we were offered the opportunity to appear on TV again, we jumped at the chance! This time, it has been my turn to step into the limelight as consultant vet on BBC Two show 'Me & My Dog: The Ultimate Contest'. Presented by Chris Packham and set in the Lake

District, the show saw eight hopeful contestants and their canine companions battle it out in a series of challenges that tested their agility, training and ultimately, their bond with their owner.

My job was to ensure the health and wellbeing of the dogs throughout filming and work alongside the professional team that also included trainers and behaviourists.

Being outdoors and enjoying the countryside together is one of the greatest pleasures of dog ownership and as the weather starts to heat up and we feel a little more adventurous in our usual walking routine, it's important to be prepared for every eventuality. Here are my top tips for ensuring that you and your dog enjoy a safe and happy summer:

- **Stay cool** – if we're lucky, we'll see some sunshine and high temperatures over the summer and even on overcast days, dogs are still far more likely to overheat than humans because of their hairy coats. Try to walk your dog early in the morning or late in the evening when it's cooler and remember to take a portable drinking bowl and water for regular stops and



rehydration. Heat stroke can be a very serious condition if not treated quickly, so if your dog begins to pant heavily during a walk, contact your vet. Other symptoms of heat stroke can include vomiting, diarrhoea, stumbling or lying down mid-walk. Fast action increases the chance of successful treatment, so if you have any concerns about your dog in the heat, don't delay!

- **Contagious coughing** – Another common doggy ailment for this time of year is Kennel Cough. This distinctive honking cough has little to do with kennels and everything to do with contact with infected dogs, whether in a park, in the woods or at a friend's house. It is highly contagious, but fortunately, preventable with a simple vaccine. Speak to your vet for more information.
- **Sneezing and wheezing** – As with humans, the arrival of spring and summer can be the trigger point for allergies in our pets, so watch out for signs of a reaction to pollen. As well as itching, sneezing and coughing, dogs may also experience runny eyes and nose. Skin irritation is also a

common symptom, especially around the ears. If your dog is regularly shaking his head, rubbing his face and body on the floor or hard surfaces, or you notice hairless patches, there is a good chance that he may be distressed and in pain caused by an allergic reaction. Your vet can prescribe medication that can ease symptoms and discomfort.

- **Be aware of snakes** – sunbathing isn't a pastime restricted to humans and a hot day can bring out all kinds of creatures to bask in the heat. Dog owners should be aware that adders, Britain's only native venomous snake, become more visible during the warmer months and can bite if disturbed. Be vigilant when walking your dog in long grass or in sand dunes. An adder bite can be fatal, so if your dog is bitten, it's important to see a vet as soon as possible. If you can, carry your dog back to the car to minimise the circulation of venom in

And finally...

Keep a first aid kit – taking time to gather a few essentials that can be kept in a rucksack or in the car can be really useful if a problem occurs. I'd suggest packing the following basic items:

- ✓ Bandages
- ✓ Surgical tape
- ✓ Sterile gauze
- ✓ Cotton wool
- ✓ An old towel
- ✓ Non-adhesive, absorbent dressings
- ✓ Scissors
- ✓ Warm blanket
- ✓ Bottle of water & portable drinking bowl

Whilst these items can be used to tend to minor accidents, if

the body or walk larger dogs calmly and slowly back to your vehicle. Call ahead to your vet to advise them that you are coming. **Blacks' Accredited Veterinary Hospital in Dudley is open 24/7 and can be contacted on 01384 252509.**



your dog is seriously injured and you are unsure what to do, **always** speak to your vet before acting to ensure the situation isn't made worse. Acting quickly and calmly can ensure your dog receives the correct medical attention and improve outcome.

By taking a few simple precautions, there's no reason why you and your four-legged friend shouldn't enjoy a happy and healthy summer. Stay safe and have fun making some brilliant memories together!



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