

Paws for Pets

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Fire Ants Pose Threat to Pets

Citing a survey of veterinarians that reports small animals & pets are treated more frequently than any other animal for fire-ant-related injuries, Bayer Environmental Science is urging pet owners to be aware of the threat fire ants can pose to their pets during the springtime, especially animals kept outdoors.

Bayer Environmental Science offers the following tips, taken from Texas A&M University's Texas Imported Fire Ant Applied Research & Education Program, to help protect pets:

- Check your property for infestation or hire a lawn care professional to do so for you. If ant mounds are present, your property must be treated.
- Young & caged animals are most at risk, and ants will usually sting body parts where there is little or no hair.
- Open sores & skin diseases attract fire ants. Pets with these conditions should be kept inside.
- If your pet is attacked, first remove it from the area and then remove the fire ants from your pet.
- Do not spray the ants off with a water hose. They will hang on & repeatedly sting the animal.



Pets & Human Allergy

Research by the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences indicates that allergens from dogs and cats are ubiquitous to homes regardless of whether these pets are part of the household. In an examination of 831 homes in 75 locations throughout the country, all homes had dog allergens and 99.9% had cat allergens—even though 55% of the homes had no pets. Sofas were the most predominant source (98% carried allergens) but beds & floors were also common sites. Pets may have inhabited the premises in the past in some cases, but the researchers hypothesize

that, because the allergens are sticky, people exposed in the outside world bring the allergens home with them.



Hard-working dogs

In this age of heightened security concerns, the US Customs and Border Protection agency in Front Royal, VA depends heavily on the keen noses of about 100-150 dogs each year to help find dangerous materials that could be used by terrorists or other criminals. The dogs also hunt for smuggled narcotics and currency. In fact, according to the US Customs and Border Protection web-site, from October 1998 through September 1999, canine enforcement teams were involved in more than 11,000 seizures that took in approximately 631,909 pounds of marijuana, 50,748 pounds of cocaine, 358 pounds of heroin and \$25.5 million in currency.



training programs that enhance their ability to locate hidden items. To help keep their hard-working canine team members healthy and on their toes, the customs agency provides its own veterinary services through the US Customs Canine Enforcement Training Veterinary Clinic. The clinic was accredited by AAHA on April 26, 2004.

To see some of the furry detectives protecting the public, go to www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/enforcement/canines/canine_program/detector_dog_gallery

[gov/xp/cgov/enforcement/canines/canine_program/detector_dog_gallery](http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/enforcement/canines/canine_program/detector_dog_gallery)

Canine enforcement teams work eight hours a day, almost every day of the week. When they aren't sniffing at border spots, the dogs are working out in

Got Milk? Don't Give it to Your Kitty

"I was brought up to believe not only that cats like milk, but also that it is good for them. My brother, who works for a veterinarian, disagrees. Who is right?" -- Milk Man

D e a r M i l k M a n :
I'm afraid the nod goes to your brother on this one. But your opinion is a popular one. Cats have been associated with milk for many, many years. You'll even find a picture of a child pouring a saucer of milk for a cat in an old edition of the *World Book Encyclopedia*.

Cats do love milk and are especially crazy about fresh cream. But these dairy products can sometimes cause a cat to vomit or pass diarrhea. That's because cow's milk is quite different in protein and fat content from the milk a kitten gets from her mother, and those differences can create intestinal problems for felines with a sensitive digestive system.

I know that many people give milk to their kitty-cats and have never experienced any problem. No doubt, these people would take sides with you on this issue. But the truth is, vets generally discourage giving milk or cream to cats because of the possibility of an intestinal upset.



But a safe alternative is available. Try giving your cat some plain yogurt or cottage cheese. You'll find your kitty will be very happy to get one of these as a special treat, and you won't

have to worry about him getting a tummy ache later on.

Training Your Dog to Come (Reliably)

Training should be fun

Many dogs don't come when called because the command "Come here!" too often translates into "The fun is over." Dogs, party animals that they are, don't like to turn away from a good time. Once Lassie learns that "Come here!" means "I have something fabulous for you!" she'll race to you when you call.

I start teaching my dogs to come as soon as they join my family. Whether they're tender pups or streetwise rescues, I call them all several times a day when I don't really need them for anything. Then, I reward them handsomely and send them back to play.

And that's the trick! I teach dogs that "Come!" means "There's more fun over here!"

Never call to punish

Owners make a big mistake when they call their dogs intending to discipline them. This makes the "come" command a risky one to obey.

Think of it this way -- imagine your boss called you into her office and immediately reprimanded you when you got there. The next time she called, how would you feel? Worried? Now, imagine instead that when you entered her office, she handed you some cash. Wouldn't you be more optimistic next time? Well, dogs are like that too. Lassie will be more likely to heed your call if she receives rewards for coming.

Try training games

For more fun, try some games that include this important command. One game to start with is "Family Ping-Pong," in which you and other family members or friends take turns calling Lassie. When she comes, give her a yummy treat. Then have someone else call her and offer a reward. Take turns out of order, keeping Lassie guessing who'll call next.

For multiple dogs, try "First Come, First Served." Call all the dogs at once, using their individual names or a "group name," like "Doggers" or "Puppies." If everyone comes quickly (make allowances for older or naturally slower dogs), reward all of them with treats. If Lassie and Laddy hurry but Mosey pokes along, make a big deal out of awarding the whole prize to the first dogs to arrive, and there won't be any treats left when Mosey ambles in. This encourages benign rivalry and leads to a quicker response.

Teaching dogs to come when called isn't difficult.



Training should be fun

Staying Safe on Wild Adventures

When you're out in the wilderness with your dog, basic safety tips apply.

When you're out in the wilderness with your dog, basic safety tips apply. Here are a few crucial points to remember:

Weather can change rapidly in the wilderness. A day hike can quickly turn into a nightmare if you aren't properly equipped. Always carry raingear, a jacket or warm sweater, water,

food, and a first-aid kit. And make sure you're prepared to care for your dog's needs in the case of an emergency.

Make sure someone knows where you are. Always tell someone where you are hiking, when you are going, whom you are going with, and when you



expect to return. Go with at least one other person; a group is even better. Sign in and out of a trail registry, if one is available.

Don't drink from streams, rivers, or ponds. Don't let your dog drink from them, either. Most streams carry giardia, a microscopic organism that will make you and your dog very sick. If you are planning to pack for more than a day, purchase a good water filtration system that will remove all harmful bacteria, viruses, and organisms.

Prevent dehydration and heat exhaustion. To check for dehydration in your dog, pinch her skin at the base of the neck and release it, letting it snap back. If it returns to its original place quickly, the dog is well hydrated. If the skin slowly melts back or doesn't return at all, the dog is showing signs of dehydration. Some breeds have loose skin, so another good spot to try this is the cheek area. Dogs who are overheated pant heavily and may stagger, vomit, or have watery diarrhea. If your dog appears to be overheated, find shade or a cool stream where you can wet the dog down in cool water.

Don't approach wildlife. Skunks, raccoons, foxes, and coyotes may be rabid. Deer, elk, bison, and moose have all been known to attack when approached. Don't allow your dog to run loose and chase game. This can stress the wildlife.