



## Keeping Your Dog Safe with Summer Pools

Summertime means pool time in Arizona. It certainly is too hot to be outside without one. Since we are heading right into our prolonged pool season, here are a few tips to keep in mind when sharing pool time with you dog:

**Ensure that the pool cover is off or secured to prevent your dog from falling in and getting trapped underneath.** If your pool cover cannot support the weight of a person that is same weight as your dog, it cannot support your dog, especially with his sharp claws.

**Fence your pool to prevent your dog from wandering in unsupervised.** This is both a safety issue as well as a convenience issue. Dogs who like to swim tend to go in as they please and you will want them to dry off before going back inside. Having an unfenced pool with access to a dog door is both a potential safety issue as well as a messy issue. Consider investing in a pool alarm to alert you to anyone in the pool.

**Do not leave your pets unsupervised around deeper water.** Deeper water is any water in which your dog's body is even halfway submerged while standing up. Water that fully or partially submerges their body will likely cause some level of weightlessness and therefore a feeling of or actually beginning to float or move with the water. It can cause your dog to panic if he is not a good swimmer.

**Provide your dog with fresh water in order to avoid the temptation to drink pool water.** Chlorinated water is bad for dogs, but saltwater pools are even worse for your dog's health should he drink too much. If your dog swallows a little pool water now and then, there shouldn't be a problem just like with humans. Ingesting enough salt water can cause diarrhea or even saltwater toxicity. Please consult your veterinarian with any concerns. Lastly, be sure to keep pool chemicals and pool equipment safely stored out of reach. Dogs are naturally curious and like to forage so be sure they do not have access to things which can cause harm or can be expensive to replace.

**Watch that your dog does not get too hot while outside.** If your dog does not go into the pool to cool off, please remember to watch for overheating. Dogs should spend very little time outside if they are not staying cool, shaded, and well hydrated with fresh clean water.

**Teach your dog to swim.** While most dogs can swim, not all dogs swim well. You should purchase a well fitted life jacket and help your dog to figure out how to navigate the pool. Don't rely on the breed to determine if your dog is a good swimmer. Just because he is a Lab or Golden does not guarantee he will be a naturally good swimmer. A good swimmer will dog paddle and is able to make it look pretty effortless. Good swimmers are able to keep their heads above water with minimal splashing while they are paddling. Their backs stay somewhat horizontal or somewhat angled in the water. Some dogs are merely splashing and flailing around and not actually getting anywhere. Please understand that these dogs are NOT good swimmers. They are panicking and

merely treading water. Their backs are more vertical as they are treading water, so they are not actually propelling themselves forward, rather upward. Please put that life jacket on to give them the confidence to learn to swim properly.

**Train your dog how to get out of the pool.** Frequently, when a dog falls into the pool, he figures out how to get to the edge of the pool, and then he spends all his energy trying to climb out. Most dogs are unable to climb out from the side of the pool without a step, especially when they are frightened after falling in. They must learn how to find the exits (i.e., stairs or Baja shelves) that will enable them to climb out. This usually entails easing your dog into the water with you and guiding him away from the sides by steering him back to the exit(s) repetitively. We then work up to the dog in the water and a person on the side holding the long leash that is attached to the dog in the water. The person on the side simply pulls the dog off the side from the leash and guides him back to swimming to the appropriate exit(s). There are additional steps involved, but a pool experienced dog trainer can guide you through the process.

**Be sure to rinse and dry your dog after pool time.** Chlorine can dry out your dog's coat and skin causing your dog to become itchy, so a good rinse is best. Don't forget to thoroughly dry his ears especially if he has floppy or folded ears. Ear infections are a constant summertime issue for some dogs, so an ounce of prevention is worth the effort.

**Train your dog to relax with pool activities.** Some dogs become anxious when there are people swimming in the pool and try to "save the swimmer." They do this either by barking repetitively in distress or by jumping into the pool to go to the person(s) swimming. Jumping into the water near or on a swimmer is potentially a very dangerous situation and can cause injury or worse. Please either keep your dog inside, or on a leash and help him to discover that no one is in distress. You can do this by rewarding him for being calm or by giving him something to do, such as a chew toy, food puzzle, frozen filled Kong, etc. to dilute his interest in the pool activities. If you still have a problem with your dog barking and reacting around the pool, please contact a professional dog trainer or behavior consultant that can help your dog to relax and enjoy the summer fun in the pool with you and your family.

Pools can be a fun part of your summer life with your family and your dog. Be sure to consider each of these tips to safely enjoy Arizona's pool season.

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