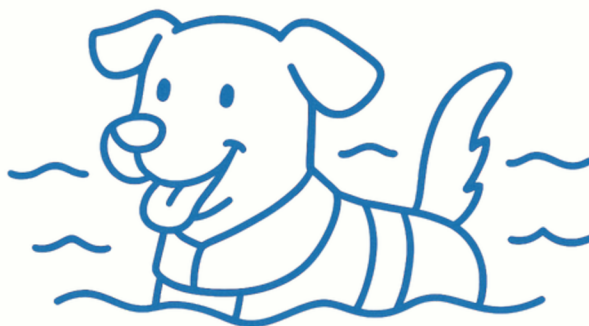


POOL SAFETY

Everyone talks about pool and water safety for children, but we need to think about it for our four legged friends as well. When the dog days of summer roll around, you can let your pet splish-splash with the rest of the family with these tips.

Since the first stroke most folks learn is “doggie paddle,” you might assume that all dogs just know how to swim. While some breeds are natural swimmers, some are not and will require some training. Dogs with broad chests, short or flat snouts, or short legs (think bulldogs, basset hounds, boxers, and dachshunds) are not naturally floaty dogs. Dogs with low body fat (such as Greyhounds and Dobermans) may also find swimming difficult.

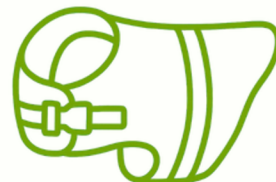


Swimming Ability

An easy test for swimming ability is to carry or lead your pooch into the pool and see how they do with you right there. If they are only paddling with their front legs and are becoming vertical in the water, Fido is going to need some lessons. Try supporting their abdomen to keep them horizontal near the surface and see if their back legs get in on the action. If not, professional lessons are available.

All sized doggie life vests are available and offer critical support while dogs get comfortable in the water; whether they just don't have a swimmer's build, or if they spend a lot of time in the pool and need the extra support.

Even good swimmers can get fatigued from all the activity and benefit from the added buoyancy.



Every Pup Needs an Exit Plan

If your dog has access to the pool when you aren't at home, it is of vital importance that you teach them how to get out of the water. Even if your dog isn't particularly interested in getting wet, the risk of an accidental or unplanned entry is ever present. Have your dog get in the water at different spots around the pool and repeatedly show them how to get out by bringing them over to the steps or ledge where they can exit. You can also add a floating ramp to make their exit easier.



POOL SAFETY

Pool Prep & Pup Protection

A secure fence is also a good option to increase the safety of your pool area. A pool alarm will signal very loudly when there is even a small disturbance on the surface.

It's important to keep in mind that pools with vinyl liners, like above-ground pools or some in-ground pools, are vulnerable to damage from your dog's nails. Fiberglass or concrete pools are generally a better choice for a doggie pool party.

Once your dog is swimming with the family, there are just a few things to keep in mind. Pool water that is safe for humans is safe for dogs. If you give your dog a good brushing before a plunge, it will help keep excess dog hair out of the pool and filter. Because pool chemicals can be very drying, it will help their skin and fur if you give your dog a hose rinse after a dip. Always remember to thoroughly dry your dog's ears after a swim to help prevent infection... especially those with long floppy ears which tend to trap moisture.



Keep Fresh Water Nearby

Be sure to keep a bowl of fresh, clean water available nearby. While it's ok for dogs to drink some chlorinated pool water, it's best if they don't drink a lot of it. If you have a saltwater pool, you must also be vigilant as drinking too much saltwater can lead to dehydration.

If you have one of those adventurous felines who enjoy water sports, all these tips will apply to them as well.

Keep Pool Hazards Out of Paw's Reach



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