



Safety in the Great Outdoors

Leaves of Three Let it Be and Other Botanical Words of Wisdom!

Dogs are susceptible to plant-based irritants just as people are. When enjoying the great outdoors with your canine companion, be mindful of your surroundings, taking note of the different species of plants in the area. Discourage your dog from “grazing” along the trail’s edge, as many plants are toxic and can cause a wide range of problems from gastrointestinal disturbances to depression of the central nervous system.

While there are literally hundreds of flowers and plants that are toxic to some degree to dogs and cats, the most commonly-found (often in our own backyards!) include:

- Sago Palm
- Tulips (bulb)
- Azaleas
- Oleander
- Chrysanthemums
- Crocus
- Pothos
- Lilacs



If your dog likes to stop and sample the flowers, not just smell them, consider installing temporary fencing along lushly-landscaped areas of your backyard throughout his puppyhood and adolescence (or for several months after adopting an older dog) to prevent him from being able to tiptoe through and taste the tulips.

Another bothersome botanical is the Foxtail. The name “foxtail” applies to a variety of grasses that consist of several bushy spikes resembling the tail of a fox. The tip of the foxtail contains a hardened callous that aids in its ability to lodge itself in a dog’s coat or body cavity. While foxtails can enter the body anywhere, the most common points of entry are between the toes, in the nose and ears. Always thoroughly inspect your dogs following nature adventures, especially in areas where foxtails have been seen. Symptoms of foxtail impaction include repeated pawing/licking of the area (for foxtails in the body), sneezing (foxtail in the nose), and head shaking (foxtail in the ear).

Snake Bites and Bee Stings and Spiders, Oh My!

When enjoying the great outdoors with your canine companion, be mindful of the following:

- Taking the Sting Out of Summer Fun – Due to their curious and playful nature, dogs often enjoy a rousing game of “bite the bee,” that is, until they discover that the bee bites back! It’s best to discourage your dog from snapping at and chasing bees and other flying insects. Be mindful of ants and spiders as well. If bitten, symptoms can range from simple skin irritations to extreme swelling and even anaphylaxis, so keep your vet’s number on hand!
- Fleas & Ticks – Fleas and ticks are not only an uncomfortable nuisance, they can cause medical problems ranging from flea-allergy dermatitis to Lyme disease, ehrlichiosis, and Rocky Mountain spotted fever; all of which can be contracted by humans as well. For the comfort of all involved, talk to your vet about an ap-

propriate flea and tick prevention program and be sure to examine your pet often, especially after hiking in wooded areas where ticks are common.

- Snakes – The Humane Society of the United States estimates there are 250 species and sub-species of snakes in the United States. The venomous snakes include rattlesnakes (several varieties), Water Moccasins (Copperhead, Cottonmouth) and coral snakes. Dogs most often become the victims of snake bites while poking their noses where they don't belong; like down a hole or in a natural crack or crevice. If your dog is bitten by a snake, seek veterinary help immediately! It's helpful if the vet knows what kind of snake it was, so try to identify the snake: Did it have a rattle or not? Color and pattern? Size?

An Ounce of Prevention!

Prevention is the most effective way to deal with snake bites! Keeping your dog leashed helps keep him out of trouble up ahead. Discourage him from nosing around in holes, woodpiles and other natural coverings. Stay on the trail where snakes are easier to spot, and avoid nighttime hiking, since snakes are nocturnal and are most active when the sun goes down. Also, remember that snakes often turn up in backyards, so be mindful of ways to keep your home turf snake-free.

In some cases, the Rattlesnake vaccine and some type of specific snake avoidance training may be helpful, so talk to your vet and a qualified trainer to determine what's most appropriate for you and your dog.

Be Mindful of All Creatures - Big and Small!

Dogs will be dogs and will do what dogs do! This often includes running gleefully after small, fast-moving critters such as squirrels, raccoons, gophers, skunks and other such critters. When off-leash, dogs can quickly find themselves out of range of worried owners, and many dogs have become lost or even hit by cars and killed this way. Keep in mind that many rodents and other small animals, while tiny, can put up a big fight with sharp teeth, claws and toxic stink-bombing technology (skunks!), so it's best to prevent actual close-encounters whenever possible. It's important to be equally mindful of larger, predatory animals such as coyotes, mountain lions, wildcats and bears, which can easily attack when they feel threatened.

The Many Benefits of Training:

A trained dog is a happy, healthy and safer dog who likely gets to enjoy more freedom when out in the world. When enjoying nature with your canine companion, the following obedience behaviors are extremely helpful, and might even save your dog's life!

- Coming When Called – Teach your dog to spin on a dime and enthusiastically race to you whenever he hears a special word. Practice often, reward generously and never, ever punish your dog once he gets to you – no matter how long it took him or what he was doing before he came.
- Leave It – Help your dog understand that turning away from and ignoring interesting distractions (such as snake/gopher holes or leftover bar-b-que bones) equals wonderful rewards (praise, petting, treats) from you.
- Focus on Owner – Training a reliable “Look!” or “Watch!” behavior where your dog looks attentively at you is a wonderful way to prevent him from fixating on the skunk lumbering across the road up ahead!
- Sit – It's always great to go back to basics! A reliable sit allows you to give your dog something to do to stay out of trouble. It's also a great way to help regain his focus and attention around exciting distractions.

Resources:

- ASPCA Poison Control Center 888-426-4435 or www.asPCA.org/pet-care/poison-control
- ASPCA Toxic and Non-Toxic Plants at www.asPCA.org/pet-care/poison-control/plants/

- ASPCA Common Poisonous Plants at www.aspc.org/pet-care/poison-control/17-common-poisonous-plants.html
- Northshore Animal League/International Animal Poison Control Center Hotline 888-232-8870
- ASPCA Snake Bite Safety and Prevention Tips at www.aspc.org/pet-care/poison-control/snake-bite-safety-prevention-tips.html
- ASPCA Dogs Chasing Wildlife at www.aspcbehavior.org/printFriendly.aspx?ald=64
- REI Outdoor Products for Dogs at www.rei.com/category/40003681
- For an Emergency Desludging remedy, visit www.greenacreskennel.com and click on the “articles” link.



Danger for Dogs in Lakes, Ponds & Other Bodies of Water

For those whose dogs love to swim in ponds, lakes, and oceans, beware a silent and sometimes deadly danger -- toxic algae. Summer heat results in the over-growth of algae, particularly blue-green algae (Cyanobacteria), that can be fatal to dogs, livestock and even to people that swim in or drink water contaminated with these toxins.

What to look for

- Cloudy Patches - Visually, algae blooms often look like scum or foam on the water's surface. It may be a patchy mat, collecting in several different areas, or covering the whole pond.
- Color - The algae may be blue, blue-green, yellow, brown, red or even colorless. The most commonly known toxic algae is “red tide” -- but algae colonies are not limited to red and are not related to tidal movement.
- Odor - Toxic algae may emit an unpleasant odor -- but not always.

When & Where

- Season - Toxic algae blooms generally appear in the late summer or early fall but also may appear at other times of the year in warm climates.
- Bodies of water - Any body of water -- salt, brackish, but especially fresh water -- can support algae growth, so if your dog swims in a pond, lake or reservoir, be mindful of the potential for serious illness and even death.
- Location - Not limited to any country or geographic area, toxic algae blooms are a world-wide phenomenon. In 1998, the World Health Organization published drinking water guideline values for one cyanotoxin.

Symptoms of exposure

If your dog has been swimming and you see any of these symptoms, consult your veterinarian immediately:

- Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea
- General malaise
- Severe thirst
- Skin and mucous membrane irritation
- Staggering and motor weakness
- Respiratory and muscular paralysis

If you suspect an algae bloom

- Not all algae is toxic, but if you suspect bacterial growth or contamination, report it to your local health authority for testing. To be on the safe side, if you're not certain, keep your dog away from the water.
- Swimming is great fun and a terrific activity for your dog, so don't let fear keep you home. But do use common sense and be aware that even seemingly clean water can be deadly.

For more articles and information on Cyanobacteria, visit these links.

- http://www.alldogsgym.com/uploaddocs/Cyanobacteria_program_article.pdf
- <http://www.alldogsgym.com/content/view/305/>

More Pond and Water Garden Dangers

Just when you thought it was safe to go back in the water...

Okay, so no real worries about sharks unless you have one of the rare surfboarding dogs, but other concerns follow summer activities and water loving dogs.

The Home Water Garden

If you've had thoughts about creating a beautiful water garden, then you need to also be aware of a few issues that might affect your dog:

- **Mycobacterium Marinum:** Mycobacteriosis is a leading bacterial infection related to aquariums or fish water. It often occurs in crowded water environments. It enters through an open crack in the skin and leads to a variety of skin lesions.
- **Campylobacter:** These bacteria create the infection campylobacteriosis, which is one of the leading bacterial infections to cause intestinal upset and diarrhea. While this also occurs in contaminated natural ponds, a buildup of fish, amphibian, and reptile waste in a water garden can infect a dog that drinks the water.
- **Chemicals and Fertilizers:** All water gardens with plants require fertilizers and water chemicals. Many chemicals used to treat algae overgrowth or maintain the water are not healthy for a dog's consumption.
- **Electrocution:** Ensure that all filtration equipment and electrical cording is well concealed from a curious dog.
- **Drowning:** Most home water gardens do not have steps or ways to get in and out of the pond. Too many curious dogs fall into ponds each year.

To insure safety in a water garden, make sure to install filtration systems to keep water flowing. Don't overcrowd the fish environment to keep wastes to a minimum and regularly maintain your pond with any necessary water changes/adding of clean water.

The Natural Pond

There are even more risks when you enter the wilderness. The pond might look like a refreshing place to cool off or play in, but there are bacteria, protozoa, and other safety issues lurking within.

Natural ponds are frequented by wildlife, and with wildlife come a range of problems. Most of these ponds have been contaminated with wildlife feces and urine, and when your dog drinks the water, he may develop diarrhea, fever, and lethargy.

A few of the most common problems to come from contaminated water:

- **Giardia:** This is a protozoan that is easily transmitted from wildlife through feces. Once inside your pet, it can cause a long lasting bout of diarrhea that will need to be confirmed through stool samples by your vet.
- **Coccidia:** Coccidiosis in dogs is caused by the Coccidia protozoan. It can lay dormant within a dog's intestines for a long time, and it is easily transmitted from dog to dog through feces contact. It, too, causes diarrhea and may take several tries by a veterinarian to be accurately diagnosed.
- **Leptospirosis:** Natural waters contaminated with infected urine from wild animals like raccoons can cause your dog to become very ill. Luckily, there is a vaccination you can give your dog to prevent this occurrence.
- **Tularemia:** Another bacterial infection caused by waste from wild animals.
- Wild pond waters can also contain the campylobacter and mycobacterium marinum.

In addition to bacteria and protozoa passed on from wild animals, you also need to be careful about possible fertilizer runoff and harmful chemicals. Many natural ponds occur in rural or farmlands where fertilizer runoff is quite common.

If your dog insists on swimming in ponds, attempt to keep your pet from drinking the water by providing a lot of fresh, clean water for him. Watch for any signs of diarrhea, fever, lethargy, or any other changes in your dog.

Important Commands Your Dog Should Know

While you may not be able to avoid all the dangers, there are some commands that all dogs should know that will assist you with the prevention of potential problems.

Make sure your dog has a good understanding of and is reliable with:

- **Leave it:** This will help you keep your dog from something potentially dangerous or just plain icky.
- **Drop it/Give:** In case he finds a dead animal or feces and tries to eat it, a good Drop it will keep him from ingesting it all.
- **Come:** Come is a great way to interrupt something a dog is doing. Rather than yelling 'No,' try to reframe it for him by giving him an alternate behavior to do. Training come to a sound, like a whistle, is an excellent option for off leash work or working at a distance.
- **Stay or Wait:** Either of these commands can keep your dog at bay in case a surprise animal appears or you need to keep him back from a potential problem.

All dogs can enjoy the outdoors but stay safe by knowing the pond related risks and how to deal with them.

Resources:

- Pond Expert at www.pondexpert.co.uk/PetsAndPondSafety.html
- What is Giardia? at www.wisageek.com/what-is-giardia.htm
- Zoonotic Diseases at [/www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/health/ehs/zoonotics/diseases.aspx](http://www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/health/ehs/zoonotics/diseases.aspx)
- Merck Veterinary Manual at www.merckvetmanual.com