



Hot Weather Policy

This policy outlines the procedures I will follow to ensure the safety and well-being of the dogs in my care during hot weather conditions. The health and safety of the dogs are my top priority and I will take all necessary precautions to prevent heatstroke and other heat-related illnesses.

This policy is based on The Dog's Trust and The Kennel Club recommendations.

Monitoring Weather Conditions:

- I will regularly monitor weather forecasts from reliable sources (e.g., the Met Office) to anticipate periods of hot weather.
- I will pay close attention to temperature, humidity levels, and the presence of direct sunlight, as these factors can all contribute to the risk of overheating.

Walking Schedules and Timing:

- During periods of hot weather (i.e. 25°C or higher), walk times will be adjusted to avoid the hottest time of the day, typically between 11:00am and 3:00pm.
- Where possible, walks will be scheduled for early mornings or late afternoons.
- Walk durations may be shortened depending on the temperature, individual needs and breed of the dog.
- For 'lunch time' walks where a dog is usually home alone and therefore unable to be rescheduled for earlier or later in the day, these will become drop-in visits. During these visits, I will instead provide a comfort break, then spend time with the dog in the garden if a shady spot is available, or indoors with other enrichment activities to avoid outdoor exercise during peak heat. The rate will be charged as for a 30 minute drop in.

Walk Locations and Environment:

- I will prioritise walking in shaded areas, such as woodlands, with accessible water such as a river to cool off in.
- I will avoid walking on hot surfaces like roads and pavements, which can burn paw pads. I will check surface temperatures with my hand before walking a dog.

- I will ensure access to fresh water throughout the walk. I will carry water and a suitable bowl for dogs to drink from regularly.
- I will avoid strenuous activities and excessive running during hot weather. Walks will focus on gentle exercise and allowing dogs to sniff and explore at their own pace.

Recognizing and Responding to Heatstroke:

- I am canine first-aid trained and I can recognize the signs of heatstroke, which can include:
 - Excessive panting
 - Heavy salivation
 - Rapid or irregular heartbeat
 - Lethargy or weakness
 - Vomiting or diarrhea
 - Stumbling or incoordination
 - Collapse
- If a dog shows any signs of heatstroke, the following steps will be taken immediately:
 - The walk will be stopped immediately.
 - The dog will be moved to a cool, shaded area.
 - Small amounts of cool (not ice-cold) water will be offered if the dog is conscious.
 - Cool water will be applied to the dog's body, particularly the neck, armpits, and groin.
 - The owner will be contacted as soon as possible.
 - Veterinary assistance will be sought immediately.

Group vs. Individual Walks:

- Due to needing to avoid keeping any dogs unattended in a vehicle, group walks may be changed to an individual walk depending on my schedule. There will be no extra charge to clients if this change is necessary due to hot weather conditions.

Client Communication:

- Clients will be informed of this hot weather policy.
- I will communicate any changes to walk schedules or durations due to hot weather conditions in advance.
- I will ask clients to ensure their dogs have access to fresh water before we arrive for a walk.

Individual Dog Needs:

- We will be aware of individual dogs that may be more susceptible to heatstroke, such as brachycephalic breeds (e.g., Bulldogs, Pugs), elderly dogs, puppies, overweight dogs, and dogs with certain health conditions. Extra precautions will be taken for these dogs.

This policy will be reviewed and updated as necessary. The well-being of the dogs in our care remains our top priority.