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Wolf Administration Offers Tips for Pennsylvanians Taking Pups to State Parks

Harrisburg, PA – The Departments of Agriculture and Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) today provided Pennsylvanians interested in taking their pups to the parks with tips to keep their furry friends and fellow park-goers safe as they enjoy the outdoors together.

“As we head into the holiday weekend and the peak of summer, Pennsylvanians will be heading for Pennsylvania’s parks with their pets,” said Agriculture Deputy Secretary Fred Strathmeyer. “But, just as you need to take precautions for yourself, such as wearing a mask around others and bringing hand sanitizer, you need to make sure your dog is prepared with an up-to-date rabies vaccine and dog license, and take steps to keep them safe while at the park together.”

Pennsylvanians heading to any of the commonwealth’s state parks for summer recreation should remember these tips:

1. Make sure your dog’s [rabies vaccination is up-to-date](#) – summer is peak season for [rabies in Pennsylvania](#), and warm weather and outdoor activities increase the chance of an encounter with rabid wildlife.
2. Have a current [Pennsylvania dog license](#) on your pet – if your dog would get lost, an up-to-date license will allow dog wardens or police to return your dog home and avoid a costly trip to the shelter.
3. Reduce opportunities for dog bites – summer months tend to bring increased reports of dog bites and attacks due to increased outdoor activity. Keep your dog under reasonable control and respect their space. Don’t let your dog be at risk of harming others or being designated as one of Pennsylvania’s dangerous dogs.
4. Do your part to keep parks clean and reduce polluting the waterways – pick up and properly dispose of your pet’s waste.
5. Be alert for suspicious water conditions – common conditions such as nutrient rich water, calm/low-flowing water, shallow water, warm temperatures, and high sunlight exposure at state park lakes can create an environment to trigger or exacerbate algae bloom. [Cyanobacteria blooms](#), often called blue-green algae, can result in serious illness or death for dogs. In general with any body of water, follow these rules of thumb:
 - If it’s green, don’t go in! Discolored water could be a sign of harmful algae bloom.
 - When in doubt, keep pets out! Don’t let your pet swim in, play, or drink discolored or scummy water.

6. Never leave your pet unattended, except when using a restroom or visiting a park building for a brief period of time. Especially, do not leave them unattended in a hot car – it only takes six minutes for a dog to die in a hot car.

In 2018, Governor Tom Wolf [signed the Motor Vehicle Extreme Heat Protection Act](#). This law protects law enforcement or other public safety officials who remove a pet from an unattended hot car and believed to be in danger. The law does not protect citizens, so any person that sees a pet in a car and believes they've been neglected or are in danger should immediately call local authorities.

“Uncontrolled pets may chase wildlife or frighten visitors, pets must be physically controlled and attended at all times and on a leash,” said DCNR Bureau of Parks assistance director Ryan Dysinger. “Dogs are welcome in many areas of Pennsylvania State Parks, but responsible ownership is the key.”

At state parks, pets are permitted in day-use areas and designated sites in campgrounds, cabins, camping cottages and yurts. All areas not otherwise noted are closed to pets. Pets are prohibited from swimming areas, inside buildings, non-pet overnight areas, and any area specifically designated as an area closed to pets. Pennsylvania State Parks allow pets in [56 designated campgrounds](#). Currently, [26 state parks](#) allow pets to stay in cabins, cottages, or yurts.

“With the ‘dog days of summer’ here, The Humane Society of the United States reminds people to start thinking about how the warm weather will impact pets and the policies covering these situations,” said the Humane Society of the U.S. Pennsylvania state director Kristen Tullo. “Whether taking a walk, a drive or just hanging out in the backyard, there are extra precautions that people can take to keep their pets happy and safe.”

All dogs three months of age and older are required to have an up-to-date dog license and rabies vaccination. Funds from dog license sales fund the work of the Bureau of Dog Law Enforcement including:

- Cracking down on illegal kennels and inspecting licensed kennels;
- Protecting stray dogs – just last year, more than 600 stray dogs were either reunited with their owners or brought to a safe shelter to wait for a forever home by Pennsylvania dog wardens; and
- Monitoring dangerous dogs and responding to dog bites – currently there are more than 600 registered dangerous dogs in Pennsylvania. Dog wardens investigate dog bites, pursue justice for victims, and maintain and track Pennsylvania’s dangerous dog registry.

The Bureau of Dog Law Enforcement is at risk of running out of funds to fuel this vital work and [in need of a dog license fee increase](#), something that hasn’t been done since 1996, to continue protecting Pennsylvanians and their furry best friends.

For information as it relates to agriculture during COVID-19 mitigation in Pennsylvania visit agriculture.pa.gov/COVID. For the most accurate, timely information related to Health in Pennsylvania, visit on.pa.gov/coronavirus.

Note: Photos and video on this issue will be available at PACast.com.

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