Your Dog and the Dangers of Water Play

When temperatures rise, playing in the water can be a great way to cool down with your dog. But do your homework before you dive in... Here are four common dangers associated with water play, along with easy tips to protect your pet:

1. Ear Infections
Dogs are prone to getting ear infections after swimming, especially if they have floppy ears. A warm, wet ear canal is the perfect breeding ground for yeast and bacteria. To prevent ear infections, it’s always a good idea to dry your dog’s ears after swimming and water play. For dogs who have a history of ear infections, it’s also advisable to use an ear cleaner that is recommended by your veterinarian.

2. Hot Spots
Wet fur can trap moisture against the skin, causing irritation or infection. Worse, many dogs will follow their natural instincts, repeatedly licking the irritated spots. Excessive licking can lead to pyotraumatic dermatitis: a.k.a. an infected hot spot. These lesions generally require medical care and antibiotics. A good preventative measure involves towel drying of your dog’s wet coat and checking for clumps of matted hair. If your dog has a long or dense coat, consider a summer haircut.

3. Drowning
Not all dogs can swim. Swimming requires good instincts and the correct body shape. Several popular breeds-including bulldogs and pugs-are too barrel chested and front-heavy to be good swimmers. Whether your breed is a natural swimmer or not, always supervise pets near the water. If an accident should occur, do not hesitate to seek emergency medical care. Even a brief, near-drowning incident can have severe health consequences.

4. Sunburn
Protecting your dog or cat from sunburn is an essential part of summertime pet care. Any area of a dog or cat covered by thin hair or by white hair is susceptible to sunburn. Pay attention to your pet’s face, ear tips, back, and even belly-especially if your pet likes to lounge in the sun. Repeated sunburns can lead to skin cancer. Luckily, sunburns are easily preventable with sunblock. Most formulas made for children are also safe to use on dogs and cats, but check with your veterinarian first. Meanwhile, find more information on pets and sunburns here.