



Contrary to popular belief, not all dogs are good swimmers. In fact each year approximately 40,000 pets die in drowning accidents.

While accidents like this happen for many different reasons, it is always best to be well prepared to keep your pets safe this season with these essential tips. Whether you head to the pool, the beach, the lake, or even out for a boating adventure, follow these easy tips to insure you and Fido have smooth sailing in waters of all kinds.

Don't assume your dog can swim; many dogs will never feel comfortable in the water. Dogs need to learn to swim just like humans do.

Playfully tossing your dog into water can be traumatizing and is never a safe or smart way to introduce a dog to the water. Tossing a stick or a ball in the water, progressively further from shore or shallow steps is an easy way to teach him to feel comfortable in the water.

Have a boating adventure planned? At night, make sure your dog stays confined inside the boat or your dog should have a life preserver on. It not only will keep him afloat, it makes him easier to spot and gives you something to grab if he jumps or falls in.

If your dog falls overboard at night, you are unlikely to find him if you are moving. If your dog falls overboard during the day, point at him

continuously in the water so as not to lose his position. Dogs cannot wave at you and don't know to scream for help.

Moisture in a dog's ear can set the ideal stage for an ear infection, so make sure to clean your pooch's ears thoroughly after each romp in the water.

Though it sounds great in theory, the beach is not always the best playground for a dog. Sand can be disastrous to get out of a long coat, and dogs don't know to avoid stepping on jellyfish or broken shells.

Have a special needs dog? He may not make the best candidate for swimming, even when supervised. Drowning can happen very quickly for a dog.

Life vests for dogs are readily available and affordable. Don't rely on a barrier or safety device! This is the last defense and no substitute for continuous supervision.

Train your dog to know how to exit the pool should they fall in.

Dog beaches may also be teeming with roundworm eggs, among other parasites. Use caution when taking your dog to the beach and never let your dog swim out far enough to be taken by the current.

Dogs, just like humans, can suffer from hypothermia in cold water, but they won't understand the water is what is making them cold.

Most dogs will gladly lap up the water they are swimming in. Pool chemicals, obviously, are not healthy to consume. Ocean water can cause vomiting and diarrhea. The salt content in sea water can also lead to serious dehydration. Lake, river, pond and stream water may seem harmless, but can actually contain parasites like Giardia or other nasty "bugs."