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Sometimes you have to see it to believe it.

The Burleson Animal Shelter now has a simple tool that can save the lives of four-legged family members and help educate adults and children alike on just how hot it can get in a vehicle during a Texas summer. That tool is a temperature gun with an infrared laser.

“We can put the temperature gun up to the cracked window or up to the glass if the window is not cracked and measure how hot it is inside the vehicle,” Kim Peckler, supervisor for Burleson Animal Services, said.

During July in Texas, outside temperatures can reach 90 degrees before noon. Say you have your dog with you and you decide to stop at a restaurant. You leave the windows on your vehicle cracked for your furry friend as you get out and lock the doors. You had your air conditioning on before the vehicle was turned off so the temperature is in the low 70s inside the vehicle. But, after just 10 minutes, with your windows cracked, that temperature rises to well over 110 degrees. And your dog is inside.



A dog's normal body temperature is 100.5 to 102.5. Imagine putting a child with a 102 fever and in a fur coat inside a closed vehicle in July. A dog with a body temperature of 103 degrees is abnormal. At 104 degrees, heat stroke can set in.

So far, the City's animal control officers have responded to three cases of animals left in cars. Citations were written.

“All of the dogs survived because someone turned the people in,” Peckler said. “The owners said they had only run into the store for a minute.”

The City of Burleson ordinance says a person commits an offense if any animal is left in a standing or parked vehicle in a way that endangers the animal's health,

safety, or welfare. The animal control officer, or police officer, has the authority to use force to remove an animal from a vehicle, then the animal will be impounded.

Anyone who sees an animal locked in a hot car, looking like it is in distress, can call animal services, 817-426-9283, or the police, 817-426-9903, immediately. Animal control officers and/or police officers can determine if an animal's health or safety is being threatened and take appropriate measures to render aid.

Leaving the dog inside the vehicle with the air conditioning on is not an alternative. It is against the Texas Transportation Code to leave a vehicle unattended without stopping the engine, locking the ignition, removing the key from the ignition, setting the parking brake effectively, and turning the front wheels to the curb or side of the highway if the vehicle is standing or stopped on a grade.

The Burleson Animal Shelter urges pet owners to follow these guidelines from the Humane Society of the United States.

- Never leave your pets in a parked car. On a warm day, temperatures inside a vehicle can rise rapidly to dangerous levels. On an 85-degree day the temperature inside a car with the windows opened slightly can reach 102 degrees within 10 minutes. After 30 minutes, the temperature will reach 120 degrees.
- Anytime your pet is outside, make sure he or she has protection from heat and sun (a doghouse does not provide relief from heat) and plenty of fresh, cool water. Heat stroke can be fatal for pets as well as people.
- Take care when exercising your pet. Adjust the intensity and duration of exercise in accordance with the temperature. On very hot days, limit exercise to early morning or evening hours, and be especially careful with pets with white-colored ears - which are more susceptible to skin cancer - and short-nosed pets. Asphalt gets very hot and can burn your pet's paws.
- In case of an emergency, it's important to be able to identify the symptoms of heat stress caused by exposure to extreme temperatures. When in doubt, contact your veterinarian immediately. Some signs of heatstroke include heavy panting, glazed eyes, a rapid heartbeat, restlessness, excessive thirst, lethargy, fever, dizziness, lack of coordination, profuse salivation, vomiting, a deep red or purple tongue, and unconsciousness. If an animal shows symptoms of heatstroke, take steps immediately to gradually lower the pet's body temperature and contact your veterinarian as soon as possible. Follow these tips, and it could save your pet's life:
 - Move the animal into the shade or an air-conditioned area.
 - Apply ice packs or cold towels to your pet's head, neck and chest or run cool (not cold) water over the animal.
 - Let your pet drink small amounts of cool water or lick ice cubes.
 - Take the animal directly to a veterinarian.

To contact the Burleson Animal Shelter, 775 S.E. John Jones Dr., call 817-426-9283 or email animalshelter@burlesontx.com.