

# What to do if you find a pet left in a vehicle

We are all becoming more aware of the risks related to leaving a pet inside a vehicle, especially on hot and sunny days. Pets should NEVER be left alone in a vehicle, even for a few minutes, during warm weather.

If you see an animal left in a vehicle on a warm day, Manitoba's Office of the Chief Veterinary Officer recommends you first take these steps:

- Write down the location (street name, address, location in a parking lot), and a physical description (make and model, colour, licence plate, whether windows are open) of the vehicle.
- Write down a description of the animal (size, colour, species, approximate age, and the colour of its gums if visible), including its behaviour (alert, barking, panting, drooling, unconscious) and whether it has any water inside the vehicle.

If several people are available, share responsibilities to help resolve the situation as quickly as possible.

- Have one person remain by the vehicle to monitor the animal's condition.
- Try to keep the environment around the vehicle and animal calm and quiet, providing shade and ventilation to the vehicle if possible.
- If the vehicle is parked in a public area, like a store parking lot, notify staff members or customer service personnel immediately with the written description of the vehicle and animal. They may be able to page and quickly locate the animal owner to resolve the situation.
- If the vehicle is parked in a residential area and you feel it is safe to do so, ask neighbours if the vehicle or animal is known to them.
- Do not attract a crowd of onlookers or stimulate activity in the animal. The additional stress of the situation could make the animal's heat stress worse.
- Contact local animal welfare enforcement agencies to report the situation and have an animal protection officer attend.
  - in Winnipeg: call the Winnipeg Humane Society Emergency Line at 204-982-2020;
  - anywhere in Manitoba (including Winnipeg): contact the Office of the Chief Veterinarian's Animal Care Line at 204-945-8000 or 1-888-945-8001 (toll-free); or
  - a local police detachment.

If the situation is reported to a local animal welfare enforcement agency, the Office of the Chief Veterinary Officer recommends witnesses to monitor the animal's condition while waiting for the enforcement officer to arrive and take corrective action as required. However, some individuals may consider taking action on their own such as providing animals in vehicles with water, lowering the windows, opening vehicle doors, breaking windows, or removing the animal from the vehicle. Be aware that:

- Animals in vehicles may be protective of their territory or unfriendly to strangers, which may lead them to lunge at or bite people who attempt to approach or enter the vehicle.
- A vehicle and its contents (including animals inside) is considered a person's personal property, so those who attempt to enter, remove or alter that property may be accused of illegal activity if they do not have lawful authority to take action.

If an animal removed from a vehicle on a warm day shows symptoms of severe heat stress and appears to be in distress, it should be immediately transported to a veterinarian for medical evaluation and treatment.

Manitobans are encouraged to contact the Animal Care Line to report specific concerns about animal welfare or animal abuse. Please contact us at 204-945-8000 or toll-free at 1-888-945-8001 or at [animalcare@gov.mb.ca](mailto:animalcare@gov.mb.ca). The phone lines are regularly monitored 7 days a week including evenings, weekends and holidays to respond to emergencies, the email address is monitored only during regular business hours.