



**THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED STATES**

New Tethering Law in Effect July 1

Enhancements of the “adequate shelter” definition (3.2-6500) will prohibit tethering in certain weather conditions and change the length required for a tether.

Effective July 1st, 2020 dogs in Virginia cannot be tethered:

- During a heat advisory, a hurricane warning, tropical storm warning or a severe weather warning (e.g. winter storm, tornado etc.).
- When the outside temperature is 85 degrees Fahrenheit or higher or 32 degrees Fahrenheit or lower.
- An exception is provided if an animal control officer inspects an animal’s individual circumstances and deems they are safe from predators and well-suited and well-equipped to tolerate the environment.

Minimum tether lengths:

- Must be 15 feet or 4 times the length of the animal, whichever is greater.
- An exception is provided if an animal control officer inspects an animal’s individual circumstances and determines that a shorter tether, of at least 10 feet or 3 times the length of the animal, makes the animal safer and better equipped to tolerate its environment than a longer tether.

Additional statutory requirements for adequate shelter:

- Moisture-proof, wind-proof and of suitable size to accommodate the dog, allowing for freedom of movement, including the ability to stand, turn around and lie down with limbs outstretched.
- Durable material with a solid, moisture-proof floor.
- Must protect the dog from rain, sleet, snow and hail.
- Is not constructed of material that readily conducts heat or cold.
- During cold weather, has a windbreak at the entrance and contains suitable, clean bedding consisting of straw, cedar shavings, etc., to provide insulation and protection against cold and dampness. Blankets, rags, and other materials that retain moisture are not suitable.
- During warm weather, has natural or artificial shade large enough to accommodate the entire dog and provide protection from direct sunlight.

The back of this flyer includes tips for assessing/documenting these cases.

For more information and support, please contact:

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Assessment and documentation

Signs of heat-related illness (hyperthermia):

- Paleness
- Heavy panting and/or excessive drooling
- Glazed eyes
- Rapid pulse
- Unsteadiness/staggering
- Bloody vomit; bloody diarrhea or nosebleed
- Dry, deep red or purple tongue; hemorrhages in the gums or under skin; coma/death.
- A temperature over 104°F

Signs of cold-related illness (hypothermia):

- Paleness
- Lethargy/weakness
- Excessive whining
- Decreased respiratory rate
- Frostbite or tissue damage of certain body parts, such as the tail, tips of the ears or foot pads
- Snow/ice on body and limbs
- Stiff limbs
- Shivering (note: shivering ceases when the body's temperature drops below 94°F)
- Temperature below approximately 101-102.2°F

If you suspect cold- or heat-related illness or injury:

- Take the animal's temperature at the time of contact. Document scene, including any physical signs and photograph.
- Obtain a weather report for the incident date, including the temperature and precipitation.
- Hypothermia, or subnormal body temperature, in otherwise healthy animals typically results from environmental exposure. Debilitated, immobilized and smaller companion animals are extremely susceptible to body heat loss.
- Seek immediate veterinary care.

Providing emergency care to dogs with suspected heat or cold-related illness:

- Always seek immediate veterinary care. Provide emergency care:
 - For heat-related illness:
 - Move the dog to a cooler area.
 - Gradually lower his body temperature by applying cool (not cold) water all over his body or soaking him in a cool bath.
 - Place cool, wet towels over the back of the neck and in the armpits, paws, ear flaps and groin area.
 - Direct a fan on wet areas to aid evaporative cooling.
 - Offer fresh, cool water if the dog is alert and wants to drink, but do not force.
 - For cold-related illness:
 - As soon as possible, warm some blankets and wrap the dog in them.
 - Fill a water bottle with very hot water, wrap it in a towel and place it against the dog's stomach (an unwrapped bottle may burn the skin).
 - Offer warmed fluids to drink.

If the dog perishes, pursue a full necropsy by a veterinarian:

- Highlight supportive findings, including organ failure and necrosis or internal bleeding.
- If a necropsy is not possible, document this finding. This can happen when the heat is so extreme that the internal organs become necrotic.
- Look for abnormalities in the body's rigidity. Permanent rigidity is unique to heat-related deaths.

In all cases:

- Obtain statements from witnesses.
- Obtain veterinary records.
- Use the totality of the circumstances surrounding the incident to show that an injury, illness or death was due to exposure to extreme weather and rule out other causes.

Recommended tools:

- Digital thermometer—Always take the temperature of living or deceased dogs at the time of contact.
- Camera.