

GRR Health

Keep Your Golden Cool and Healthy This Summer

Editor's Note: Summer in Central Texas can be brutal to say the least. It's hard enough on us humans who can crank up the air conditioner or at the very least turn on a fan. But for our four-legged, hairy friends—summer can be deadly. As the heat index rises, the risk of heat stroke, ear infections, and skin allergies also rises. The following articles do a wonderful job of providing tips to help keep our Golden healthy and cool.

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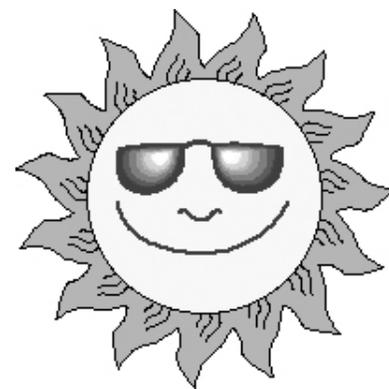
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Never, Never, Never.... Shave a Golden

As you travel around Austin in the summer, you'll doubtless see plenty of shaved Golden and other thick-coated dogs. And it seems logical: get rid of all that heavy fur, and your Golden will be cooler, right? WRONG.

Many people mistakenly believe that shaving or severely clipping their Golden is a wonderful way to keep the dog cool and comfortable in warm weather. What they don't realize is that they're actually putting the dog at greater risk of health problems like skin cancer—and the dog is NO cooler. Here's why:

A Golden's coat is made up of two parts— the long and smooth outercoat and the soft and fuzzy undercoat— which work together throughout the seasons to protect the skin from sun, heat, cold and moisture. To understand how the two coats work together, consider what naturally occurs in a Golden's coat as the seasons progress ...

The undercoat thickens in cold weather to keep the Golden warmer and dryer. It also begins to come out in big clumps in warm weather, when the Golden no longer needs as much of it. (You probably know all about those hair balls floating around on your kitchen floor!)

If the dog is shaved, the undercoat will immediately begin to grow and thicken— often to double or even triple the normal thickness— in an attempt to restore the protection which has been lost. The dog winds up as hot as if not hotter than before.

That's why the key to keeping your Golden not only cool but safe in warm weather is to keep the protective outercoat intact— something shaving or severe clipping DOES NOT do— and to remove the undercoat on a regular, weekly basis.

To do this easily and effectively, invest in an *Undercoat Rake*. Once you use one of these handy grooming tools you'll wonder how you ever got along without one! It makes very quick work of brushing, particularly when the goal is to remove lots of undercoat. And you'll significantly reduce those floating hair balls in your home!

They're available at most pet supply stores, and through pet supply catalogues and web sites. Or you can help support GRR by ordering one directly from our website boutique at GRR-tx.com. You're Golden will thank you!

Beware of Heatstroke

For many dogs, hot Summer days pose a serious health threat — heat stroke— when they are left in cars, or yards or anywhere where temperatures rise to dangerous levels.

Temperatures inside a car can soar to over 150 degrees in a matter of minutes, turning the inside of your car into an oven. Leaving your dog in a poorly ventilated car with the windows partially open will probably result in heat stroke, a life-threatening condition that CAN and should be avoided.



But be aware— heat stroke doesn't only happen in cars. It can also happen right in your own backyard, just by leaving your dog outside in the blazing sun with no access to shelter or shade. Another good reason for our "Inside While Gone" policy.

Signs of heatstroke include weakness, glassy eyes, dehydration, vomiting, diarrhea, pale gray lips and body temperature in excess of 107 degrees (a dog's normal temperature is 102.5 degrees).

You must act quickly to reduce the dog's temperature below 103 degrees. Move the dog inside to an air conditioned room or to a cooler, shady area and get the dog some cool water to drink or rinse its mouth with water to aid the cooling process. If the dog is unable to drink or is unconscious, DO NOT try to pour the water down the dog's throat. You don't want to add choking to this medical emergency. Apply cool water all over the dog's body. Apply ice packs wrapped in a wash cloth or towel to the top of the dog's head, the back of the dog's neck, and the dog's chest.

AND GET THE DOG TO THE VET ASAP! Heat stroke ALWAYS requires immediate veterinary attention.

Goldens Love the Water—Their Ears Don't

Those hairy, hanging ears on a Golden are especially sweet when they're perked up with their doggie head cocked to one side. But one of the reasons that Goldens are prone to ear infections is because of those floppy ears. The ear canals (which are L shaped) are shut off from air and can stay moist and warm— an ideal environment for bacterial growth. Untreated ear infections often develop into chronic conditions which are very painful to the dog and can even

Golden Tips for a Cool Summer...

Tip #1: Take your dog out for exercise early in the morning and in the evening, before the sun is up and after it has begun to go down. Do NOT make her come jogging with you at lunchtime or right after work! She'll try to keep up to please you, but it's dangerous for her. How would YOU like to go jogging in a full-length fur coat in a Texas summer?

Tip #2: Before walks, try installing this primitive doggie air-conditioning system. Get a hand towel sopping wet with cool to lukewarm water. Now rub your dog all over-head, face, back, sides, tummy. Now walk on out the door with your damp and fragrant buddy— and be sure to stop for a minute in any running sprinklers along your route!

Tip #3: If you like to take your dog along on errands, be sure he can go into the store, cleaner's, etc. WITH you. Don't leave him in the car— even with the windows cracked open— and even if it's only for a few minutes. A few minutes can unexpectedly turn into more, and dogs overheat FAST in closed cars. (How much help would cracked-open windows be to you if you were wearing a heavy coat?)

Tip #4: Dogs like ice cubes! Put a few in the water bowl or just give them a chunk of ice to lick. Or try combining a couple of mashed bananas with a cup of plain yogurt. Spoon the mixture into small, flat-bottomed ice-cream cones (like Comet Cups). Freeze and give to your dogs for a special treat.

Tip #5: Freeze your water bottles for day trips. They work great in the cooler to help keep your food and drinks cold and when they begin to melt— Oh yea, ice cold water for you and your dog!

cause deafness. In some cases, surgery is necessary to rectify the problem.

It's generally a good idea do an "ear check" once a week, but if your Golden likes to spend the Dog Days of summer in the water, then their ears should be cleaned at the end of each day they swim. A few drops of a half and half combination of distilled white vinegar and isopropyl alcohol in each ear after swimming often prevents yeast growth and helps to prevent bacterial infection. There are other cleaning solutions that you can make at home or purchase from a pet store, but in all cases, check with your veterinarian to see which 'recipe' they recommend for your dog.

The most common reason, by far, for recurrent ear problems in Goldens is

underlying allergy. All sources of allergy (flea, inhalant, and food allergy) can manifest as ear problems— but that's a whole other article!! Be good to your dog's ears. 

Banana Rama Kong

For a refreshing frozen treat on a sizzling Texas summer day try this recipe:

Mix together:

1 fresh banana (mashed)

2 tbs wheat germ

1 tbs plain yogurt (or favorite flavor)

Stuff into Kong and freeze for 4 hours. Double recipe for large kong.

