



Dogs, Docks, and Dangers:

A Summer Outdoor Guide to Pet Safety



Itchy, Irritated, Infected

Lake water can affect a dog's ears in several ways, particularly if the dog swims frequently or if the water quality is poor. Here are the main risks and effects:

Ear Infections

Moisture trapped in the ear canal creates a perfect environment for bacteria and yeast to grow.

Dogs with floppy ears (like Labradors or Cocker Spaniels) are more prone because their ear canals retain more moisture and have less airflow.

Symptoms include head shaking, scratching at the ears, redness, swelling, odor, or discharge



Contaminants

Bacteria, fungi, and parasites found in natural bodies of water can enter the ear canal.

Algae, especially blue-green algae (cyanobacteria), can be particularly dangerous and toxic if ingested or if it contacts the skin or ears.

Foreign Debris

Debris like sand, dirt, or plant material can get lodged in the ear canal and cause irritation or infection.

If you notice signs of an ear infection or your dog seems uncomfortable after swimming, consult a veterinarian promptly. Ear infections can worsen quickly and may require prescription treatment. Ear infections treated early can be most cost efficient and safer for your pets. Ear wash can be beneficial occasionally after swimming to clean and protect their ears.

Water safety

Invest in a dog-specific life jacket

Life jackets help keep your dog afloat, and many also come with loops on the back for you to pull your pet out of the water. Look for a life jacket that secures at the chest and underneath the belly, and make sure it's a snug fit. A life jacket that's too loose may come off your dog during an emergency.



Desensitize your dog to water

Before your dog is ready for the big pool or lake, start with a kiddie pool in your yard. Then start in the shallow edge of water before any dock diving.

Be mindful of your dog's swimming skills and age

Always monitor your dog while they swim, and make adjustments to where and how long they swim based on their ability -- this is important no matter what age your pup is. You never know how a dog may respond in a new situation or to a change in their environment



Camping or Trails

Leash & Supervision

- Prevents wandering into dangerous terrain or encountering wildlife like porcupines.
- Provide shade in hot weather and a warm, dry place to sleep at night.

Campfire & Food Hazards

- Open flames (burn risk)
- Human food (toxic items like onions, chocolate, or bones)
- Trash (moldy food, packaging)

We're here for our established patients 24/7 with emergency care. If you think something's wrong, please don't wait — give us a call!