

Seasonal care for dogs in India: Keeping your pet healthy all year round

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<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18001088>

Introduction

India's changing seasons bring a wide range of challenges for dogs, from scorching summers to damp monsoons and chilly winters. As responsible pet parents, understanding how the weather affects our furry companions is essential for keeping them healthy, comfortable, and happy throughout the year. Each season requires specific care, but with some thoughtful adjustments, you can ensure that your dog remains active, safe, and disease-free regardless of the climate.

Summer Care

Indian summers are extremely harsh, with temperatures often soaring above 40°C. Such high heat can quickly lead to dehydration and heatstroke in dogs. Large breeds and those with dark or thick coats are especially prone to overheating, so it's best to avoid walks and outdoor play during the hottest hours of the day—from late morning until early evening. Early morning or late evening walks are safer options. Always make sure that your dog has access to plenty of clean, cool water at all times. Hydration is the key to surviving the summer heat, and placing several water bowls around your home helps ensure your pet can drink whenever it wants.

During the hotter months, dogs often eat less because of reduced appetite. Offering food during cooler parts of the day, such as early morning or late evening, encourages better intake. Light, easily digestible meals and refreshing treats like watermelon or coconut water can help your pet stay energetic and hydrated. Providing a shaded and well-ventilated resting area is also crucial. Avoid keeping your dog on hot concrete or tiles; instead, use mats or cooling beds to make

them comfortable. Never leave your pet inside a parked car, even for a few minutes, as the temperature inside can rise rapidly and become fatal.

Dogs don't sweat like humans do—they can only sweat through their paw pads and rely mainly on panting to cool down. Letting them walk on cool, damp surfaces can help regulate their temperature. However, if your dog pants excessively, drools heavily, or becomes weak, it could be an early sign of heatstroke. In such cases, move the dog to a cool area, offer water, and cover its body with a cool, damp towel. Avoid using ice-cold water as it may cause a sudden drop in temperature and lead to shock.

Grooming also plays a vital role during summer. It's a common misconception that shaving the dog's coat short will keep it cool. In reality, the fur provides insulation and protects the skin from ultraviolet (UV) radiation. Instead of shaving, focus on regular brushing to remove loose hair and improve air circulation, especially in double-coated breeds like German Shepherds, Huskies, or Golden Retrievers. If you are traveling with a small dog, ensure that its carrier is spacious and well-ventilated, and never cover it with thick fabric or plastic that can trap heat inside.

Rainy Season Care

The monsoon brings relief from the summer heat but also introduces high humidity and several health risks. One major concern during the rainy season is leptospirosis, a bacterial infection that spreads through contaminated water. It is advisable to vaccinate your dog at least a month before the onset of rains to provide effective protection. The warm, humid weather is also ideal for the

growth of ticks and fleas, which can cause skin irritation and transmit diseases like tick fever. Tick prevention should be a year-round routine, but it is especially important from March to October. Use vet-recommended spot-on treatments, collars, powders, or chewable tablets to keep ticks and fleas under control. Regularly check your dog's coat, particularly around the neck, ears, and paws.

Rainy days also mean wet walks. Investing in a good-quality raincoat keeps your dog dry and comfortable. After every walk, make sure to dry the paws thoroughly. Prolonged dampness can cause itching, redness, or fungal infections. Using disinfectant paw dips can further reduce the risk of infection. The increased humidity during this time also raises the chances of ear infections, especially in floppy-eared breeds like Beagles and Cocker Spaniels. Clean your dog's ears regularly with a vet-approved ear cleaner and check for any signs of odor or discharge. Regular grooming during this season helps prevent matting of the fur and maintains coat hygiene.

Winter Care

The winter months can be quite cold, particularly in northern and hilly regions of India. Small breeds and short-coated dogs, such as Dachshunds and Pugs, are more sensitive to low temperatures and require extra warmth. Providing warm bedding and blankets helps protect them from the cold. Keep the bed away from damp floors and chilly drafts. Older dogs often suffer from stiff joints during winter, so it's important to keep them warm and comfortable.

Diet also plays an important role during colder months. Feed energy-rich food that helps maintain body temperature and keeps your pet active. You may slightly increase the portion size if your dog is more active in winter. Bathing should be done less frequently to prevent skin dryness.

Year-Round Care

While seasonal adjustments are necessary, certain aspects of dog care remain constant throughout the year. Regular deworming is one of them. It is recommended to deworm your dog once every three months

under veterinary guidance. Parasite infections are more common during hot and humid months but can occur at any time of the year.

Exercise is another essential part of a dog's daily routine, regardless of the season. Regular walks, play sessions, or simple training exercises help maintain physical fitness, strengthen muscles, and prevent obesity. Exercise also supports mental health by reducing boredom and anxiety. The timing and location of exercise should be adjusted according to the weather—early mornings or late evenings during summer, dry patches during the rainy season, and warmer hours of the day in winter.

Bathing and coat care are equally important. Avoid using shampoos more than once a week, as excessive washing can strip the natural oils from the skin and cause dryness. Instead, give frequent water-only baths or wipe your dog with a clean, damp cloth to remove dust and odors. Always dry your pet completely after a bath, especially during the rainy and winter seasons, to prevent infections. Regular brushing helps improve circulation and removes dead hair.

Routine veterinary checkups are crucial to monitor your dog's overall health. Regular vaccinations, dental cleaning, and parasite control should never be neglected. Paying attention to changes in appetite, energy level, or coat condition can help detect early signs of illness. A combination of proper nutrition, exercise, hygiene, and love goes a long way in keeping your dog healthy and happy.

Conclusions

Your dog's well-being depends largely on how well you adapt its care to the changing seasons. India's climate is diverse and often extreme, but with a few thoughtful measures, you can help your dog thrive all year long.

Keep them cool and hydrated during the summer, clean and dry during the rainy season, and warm and nourished during the winter. Along with regular exercise, grooming, and veterinary care, these simple seasonal adjustments ensure your furry friend enjoys a long, healthy, and joyful life by your side.