



# Larry Powell

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## Get ready to sweat

**O**K, folks, we've reached June, 2007. Your dogs and cats know what's coming.

They've probably been reading National Weather Service updates or watching the Weather Channel, and they know that, officially, summer arrives this month.

The assorted almanacs (the venerated *Old Farmer's Almanac*, for example) and the NWS experts all agree with Mother Nature that, in the Central Time zone, summer will begin at 1:06 p.m. on Thursday, June 21.

That's our "official" summer. But, as North Texans know, summer is year-round—just as likely to pop up in December as in June. We'll be all holly jolly and the temps can push into the 90s. I once played Santa at Dallas Heritage Village's Candlelight Celebration in Dallas in the first week of December. Sat in the gazebo in the middle of the park, ho-ho-hoed and wiped sweat from my brow while mosquitoes feasted on my right chubby ol' elf self.

The point is, you can't hide from summer in North Texas. And neither can your critters. Oh, yeah, the other point is: Humans are supposed to be smart enough to not do dumb things.

So, for the benefit of the humans (always in need of a refresher course), we have some tips for summertime animal care. These are gleaned from assorted animal groups such as the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals ([www.aspca.org](http://www.aspca.org)). The SPCA of Texas ([www.spcatexas.org](http://www.spcatexas.org)) issues similar tips every summer—every summer for *years*. Nearly every rescue group in the area has tips.

And, of course, many of the rescuers know what has gone wrong because they are the people who are discreetly summoned to pick up the dehydrated dogs, gasping cats, etc., when someone makes a call and says, "My neighbor is ignoring his animals."

Sometimes things are just not pretty. Sometimes the animals are so far gone they can't be saved. This is a human failing—it is not the fault of the animal.

So, prevention is the best cure. Remind people to do the right thing—some of these people pay no attention to speed limits, tax laws, etc., but, every now and then, you hope, a reminder will penetrate.

You'd think people wouldn't need to be reminded not to leave kids and/or animals inside cars on warm spring and hot summer days. But some people are thick or thoughtless or—here's my best guess—were left too long in a hot car themselves.

If you're an animal fan, you've never even needed the summertime tips. But maybe you have a neighbor who appears to be under the impression that the family dog can work a faucet. Maybe the neighbor thinks cats are like wilderness scouts and can find water by cutting open a barrel cactus—not a lot of barrel cacti in a front yard of Bermuda grass and weeds.

Maybe you drive past a place every day where a dog is chained to a stake in the middle of a treeless yard. Without breaking a law or incurring wrath, maybe you can hand over a list of tips. Sometimes, when they know someone is watching, their behavior changes for the better. Sometimes it doesn't. Humans—too many variables and not that dependable. You can also dial the authorities—in Texas it's against the law to fail to properly provide for your animals. Neglect isn't just a sin, it's a crime.

These things are so simple to fix. It really is a matter of motivating the humans to do the right thing: Every day make sure the animal has plenty of fresh water and plenty of shade. Make sure the animal has a vet checkup—this will head off ugly mange and other problems. It'll help determine if mosquitoes have passed on a heartworm infestation. Get rid of the fleas—fleas carry disease.

For crying out loud, you take a bath and go to a clinic, make sure your animal gets the same break. It's the decent thing to do.

And don't take anybody in a fur coat for a run in the sun—heat stroke is the danger, knucklehead.

Of course, the proper thing is to move your critters indoors and let them enjoy the finer things of life, including your personality, if you have one. Dogs and cats, generally, are social animals though they may not be social to every relative—after all, even animals have standards. Cats, in particular, may be loathe to show affection when prompted. Cats don't like to be told what to do and aren't really wired to be glad-handing greeters at a discount store.

Dogs are not meant to be staked out and forgotten. What good is a guard dog if he's too parched to bark? Too weak to stand? Too lonely to care?

Some of us believe all dogs and cats are indoor, domesticated animals. The key is "domesticated"—wild animals are wild, domesticated need help to survive.

Those of us who have indoor critters know that there are also tips for keeping indoor animals safe

