

# Water Safety Policy

Water can provide a wonderful source of entertainment and fun for the entire family, including for a pup, but it is of the utmost importance to follow some simple safety precautions. Pups require the same water safety precautions that you would practice for a human toddler.

## First and Foremost:

- **Pups and dogs must be supervised at all times when near a body of water, even when they are on-leash, tethered, or in an enclosed area.**
- Just because the pup is a dog, it does not mean that he automatically understands water and can swim.
- Not all pups like water. Read the pup's body language, and do not force a pup into water.

## Water Dangers for Pups

- Drowning.
  - Most pups under 12 months of age do not have the physical strength or cognition to hold their heads above the surface of the water for an extended period of time.
  - Many pups do swim “doggie paddle” and can hold their breath underwater for short periods of time, however:
    - Some will swim straight down.
    - Some may swim in circles until they run out of air, and then aspirate water.
  - Powerful waves along the shoreline can unbalance pups, and wash footings out from beneath them.
  - Strong currents can drag a pup out into open waters.
- Accidental hanging may occur if the pup has been tethered, and attempts to jump out of a boat, or off a wharf. They may not realise that the water is not solid ground.
- Shoreline hazards.
  - Decaying animals such as fish and birds.
  - Debris that has washed up, such as fish hooks, glass, or boards with protruding nails. These may cause injury to the pup's paw pads if walked upon, or to the mouth if picked up.
- When swimming, a pup may be crushed between a boat and the wharf.
- Pups may catch and injure their toes or pads between the gaps on wooden slated wharfs, or on protruding nails.
- Swimming pools present a drowning hazard to pups. Limited time, if any, should be spent in domestic pools. If a pup gains access and enters an unknown swimming pool, it may drown due to not being able to locate an exit route.
- In-ground fish ponds must be fenced so that pups cannot gain access.
- Pups should not be taken kayaking or canoeing.

## **What to Watch for When a Pup is in the Water**

- Distress.
- Overexertion.
- If on leash, ensure that the pup does not get his legs tangled, or that the leash does not get caught on plants, obstructions, toys, people, or other dogs.

## **What to Do**

- Like people, pups can drown in shallow water, so always stay connected to your pup and be observant.
- Enter water sources from appropriate points. Graded surfaces or ramps that allow the pup to enter the water gradually are ideal.
- If walking along water sources such as beaches and rivers, be mindful to avoid decaying animals such as fish and birds.
- If on a boat;
  - The pup must wear an appropriately sized lifejacket.
  - The pup must be restrained by the handler, but not tethered in case of an accident.
- Pups may go to on-leash dog beaches, provided carers are vigilant of other unknown dogs and potential hazards.
- Use a leash or long line when swimming with the pup.
- Children's clam shells or paddle pools are acceptable for pups to play and cool-off in, but they should always be supervised.

## **What NOT to Do**

- Never leave the pup unattended near any body of water, including swimming pools, creeks, dams, lakes, oceans, or beaches.
- Under no circumstances should the pup be tied to a boat, canoe, kayak, or a wharf.
- Do not allow the pup to swim around, or between, boats and the wharf.
- Using a lifejacket does not replace supervision.
  - Lifejackets do not hold the pup's head above the water, and hence they can still drown.
  - They may cause the pup to work harder to swim, resulting in earlier fatigue.
  - Be mindful that when a pup is out of the water, wearing a lifejacket can be uncomfortably hot.

**REMEMBER – Pups and dogs must be supervised at ALL times when near a body of water.**