

A Summer Safety Guide for UK Vizsla Owners

Summer is the perfect time to explore the great outdoors with your Vizsla. Whether you're heading to the beach, countryside, or local park, it's important to be aware of seasonal health risks that can affect your dog. This guide will help you enjoy safe and happy adventures together.

Heat Stroke

What is it?

Heat stroke occurs when a dog's body temperature rises dangerously high, often due to overexertion in hot weather or being left in a hot environment.

Signs to watch for:

- Faster, heavier panting
- Barking, whining or signs of agitation
- Excessive thirst
- Excessive drooling
- Increased pulse and heartbeat
- Dark-coloured (red or purple) gums or tongue
- Glassy eyes
- Elevated body temperature of 40°C (104°F) and up
- Staggering, weakness or collapse
- Seizures
- Unconsciousness



How to prevent it:

- Walk your dog during cooler parts of the day (early morning or late evening) and reduce activity e.g. keep dogs on leads or avoid ball games in the heat.
- Always provide access to fresh, cool water and shade.
- Avoid hot pavements and hot sand—if it's too hot for your hand, it's too hot for their paws.
- Never leave your dog in a parked car, even with windows open, and provide shade, water and cool air (e.g. air con) if driving in hot weather.

What to do:

Heatstroke is a medical emergency and requires immediate action and veterinary support.

Cool your dog by hosing, pouring cold tap water all over the body or place them in a bath/paddling pool to rapidly reduce temperature and call your vet (don't leave them unattended in water in case of collapse).

This could save your dog's life. If you attempt to cool with lukewarm/tepid water or transport before cooling your dog will be at increased risk.

Sand Impaction

What is it?

Sand impaction happens when dogs ingest sand while playing, digging, or retrieving toys at the beach. The sand can compact in the intestines, causing a blockage.



Symptoms include:

- Vomiting
- Constipation or straining to defecate
- Abdominal discomfort or bloating
- Lethargy or restlessness

Prevention tips:

- Supervise beach play and discourage digging or eating sand.
- Rinse toys and fur to remove excess sand.
- Bring clean water and toys to keep your dog occupied.

When to see a vet:

If your dog shows signs of discomfort after a beach trip, especially if they've been digging or mouthing sand, consult your vet promptly.

Water Intoxication

What is it?

Also known as hyponatremia, this occurs when a dog swallows too much water, diluting the sodium in their bloodstream. It's more common in dogs that love to swim or play fetch in water.

Symptoms to look for:

- Bloating
- Vomiting
- Loss of coordination
- Pale gums
- Seizures or collapse

How to prevent it:

- Limit water play to short sessions with breaks.

- Use floating toys to reduce gulping.
- Monitor your dog's behaviour and stop play if they seem overly tired or bloated.

Emergency action:

Water intoxication is life-threatening. If you notice symptoms, seek veterinary care immediately.

Adder Bites

Where are they found?

Adders are the UK's only venomous snake, often found in heathlands, sand dunes, and moorlands—especially in southern England.

Signs of a bite:

- Sudden yelp or pain
- Swelling, usually on the face or leg
- Lameness or reluctance to move
- Lethargy or collapse in severe cases



What to do:

- Keep your dog calm and carry them if possible to reduce venom spread.
- Do not apply a tourniquet or try to suck out the venom.
- Get to a vet immediately—antivenom may be needed.

Prevention:

- Keep dogs on leads in known adder habitats.
- Stick to clear paths and avoid undergrowth.

Water hemlock

Ominously dubbed "dead man's fingers," is one of the most toxic plants to dogs, especially in summer when it's more likely to be encountered during walks or outdoor play. Found near wetlands, ditches, and stream banks, even a small nibble of its root or stem can trigger violent seizures, tremors, vomiting, and potentially death within hours due to its high concentration of cicutoxin. Its innocent-looking white flowers disguise a deadly poison that works frighteningly fast.

What to do:

- Swift veterinary attention is critical.

Prevention:



Photo courtesy of Facebook.com/BeachGuardian

- Keeping dogs on a leash near suspicious vegetation
 - Being familiar with what this plant looks like can literally be lifesaving.
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Weever Fish Stings

Where are they found?

Weever fish bury themselves in shallow sandy waters along UK coastlines. Dogs can be stung when stepping on them.

Symptoms include:

- Sudden limping or yelping
- Licking or biting at the paw
- Swelling or redness
- Signs of pain or distress

Treatment:

- Soak the affected paw in warm (not hot) water for 15–20 minutes.



- Contact your vet if symptoms persist or worsen.

Prevention:

- Avoid letting your dog paddle in shallow, sandy areas during low tide.
 - Consider dog booties for sensitive paws.
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Bloat (Gastric Dilatation-Volvulus)

What is it?

Bloat is a serious condition where the stomach fills with gas and may twist, cutting off blood supply. It's more common in deep-chested breeds like Vizslas.

Warning signs:

- Swollen or hard abdomen
- Unproductive retching
- Restlessness or pacing
- Rapid breathing or drooling
- Collapse

Prevention tips:

- Avoid feeding your dog right before or after exercise.
- Feed smaller meals throughout the day instead of one large meal.

- Use slow-feeder bowls to reduce gulping.
- Limit water intake immediately after vigorous activity.

Emergency:

Bloat is life-threatening. If you suspect it, go to the vet immediately—every minute counts.

☐ Top Tips for Safe Summer Adventures

- ☐ Avoid strenuous activity and the midday sun in hot weather.
 - 💧 Carry plenty of fresh water and a collapsible bowl.
 - 🐾 Check paws for cuts, burns, or stings after walks.
 - 📍 Know the location of the nearest vet when travelling.
 - 🧰 Pack a doggy first aid kit with essentials like bandages, saline, antihistamines (vet-approved), and tick removers.
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🧠 Final Thought

Your Vizsla thrives on outdoor fun, but their safety is in your hands. With a little preparation and awareness, you can enjoy unforgettable summer days together—safely and happily.
