

This Outdoor Hazard Is More Likely to Harm Your Dog Than a Fall or Attack

If you consider a fall or wildlife encounter your dog's greatest hazard when hiking or camping, you might be surprised to learn that this is a much more common hazard for you both. Don't set out into the great outdoors until you consider these 10 things.

Reviewed by Dr. Becker

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Getting out into nature with your dog for some hiking, backpacking, or camping is good for body and soul
- Smart outdoor enthusiasts follow a few common sense guidelines to insure they, and their canine companions, stay healthy and safe
- In tick-endemic areas, tick-borne disease is a significant risk if you and your dog spend a lot of time outdoors. You'll want to take proper precautions to prevent ticks from biting or attaching
- If you're looking for a new adventure to share with your four-legged companion, you might want to consider a few days at doggy camp
- If you're considering taking a young dog to camp, he should be well-socialized. Older dogs should be easygoing and agile enough to put up with a little rough play from the youngsters

Editor's Note: This article is a reprint. It was originally published August 12, 2015.

These days, more and more outdoor enthusiasts are spending their leisure time hiking, backpacking, camping, or engaged in other outdoor activities with their canine companions.

There's nothing quite like an adventure in the great outdoors to clear the mind, heighten the senses, and give four-legged family members an opportunity to feel the earth beneath their paws and explore the smells, sights, and sounds of the natural world.

Being outside in nature offers countless benefits for body and mind, but it also presents some risks that you should be aware of and prepared for. And while most people worry primarily about a fall or other injury or a frightening encounter with wildlife, a much more common outdoor hazard is exposure to infectious disease.

Both you and your dog can contract an illness from infected animals, insect vectors (typically mosquitoes, ticks, flies, fleas, or mites), contaminated soil and water, and even spoiled food.

Tips for Staying Safe During Outdoor Adventures

The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) offers common sense guidelines for keeping yourself and your canine companion safe during outdoor adventures. Some of these include:¹

- Don't attempt an outing like camping, backpacking, or hiking if either you or your dog are under the weather. You may be in a physically weakened state, making exertion risky, and your immune system may also be overwhelmed, which means you're more susceptible to disease.
- Keep your equipment in good condition so that neither the elements nor unwanted visitors (insects or wildlife) can intrude on your tent, sleeping bag, mosquito netting, etc.
- Take precautions to minimize insect bites.
- Wash your hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based sanitizer immediately after handling animals, soil, equipment, or food.
- Wash tools, cooking equipment, and food prep surfaces (including tables and cutting boards) thoroughly with soap and water after use. If contamination with soil or animal feces is suspected or known, disinfect the equipment and surfaces immediately.
- Keep your human and dog food in sealed storage containers, and make sure to keep perishables refrigerated or iced down.
- Don't allow your dog to eat dead wildlife or animal feces.
- If you encounter any signs of sick wildlife or wild bird die-off, report it to the state game and fish agency or wildlife agency.
- If you'll be in an area where insects are prevalent, consult a holistic veterinarian about the best way to protect your dog from pests while he's outdoors.
- Consider getting some basic training in human and animal first aid techniques, and carry a first aid kit for your pet along with your own.

Preventing Tick-Borne Illness

In tick-endemic areas, tick-borne diseases such as Lyme disease, anaplasmosis, babesiosis, ehrlichiosis, and Rocky Mountain spotted fever, present one of the greatest dangers to outdoor enthusiasts and their dogs. These diseases are fatal, which is why preventing tick bites by checking your dog nose-to-tail a few times each day is so important.

Guidelines to help prevent tick-borne disease:²

- If you're planning to camp, before leaving home check your tent for holes that could allow insects inside and make repairs as necessary.
- Apply a safe tick repellent to your clothing and exposed skin. Make sure your dog is also protected with an all-natural, nontoxic pest repellent spray, spot-on treatment, and/or collar.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants; tuck pant legs into socks.
- Try to wash your clothes in between wearings to remove ticks, and be sure to wash them as soon as you get home.
- Check your dog frequently during the day for ticks or, at a minimum, at the end of each day. Any ticks you find should be promptly and carefully removed as demonstrated in this video:

- Have your vet check for tick borne diseases twice a year with a SNAP 4Dx Plus or Accuplex test

How About a Trip to Doggy Camp?

If you're looking for a new outdoor adventure for you and your canine companion, have you considered dog camp?

There are a number of these camps across the U.S., and each has its own style and theme. Some camps offer activities for every dog, from high-energy models to couch potatoes. Some are geared specifically for canine athletes; others are more about fun and relaxation. A few camps you might want to check into:

- Canine Camp Getaway, Lake George, New York
- **Camp Dogwood**, Illinois and Wisconsin
- Camp Winnaribbun, Lake Tahoe at Zephyr Cove, Nevada
- **Maian Meadows Dog Camp**, Lake Wenatchee, Washington
- Camp Unleashed, Massachusetts and North Carolina
- The Getaway at Glen Highland Farm, Morris, New York
- Yellowstone Dog Camp, Red Lodge, Montana

Dogs that do well at camp enjoy hanging out and playing with others of their species (and their owners). They're trained in basic obedience commands, including coming when called.

If you're considering taking a young dog to camp, he should be well-socialized. Older dogs should be easygoing and agile enough to put up with a little rough play from the youngsters.

Large breeds should know how to treat smaller dogs, and the little ones shouldn't be overly fearful of dogs much bigger than they are.

Sources and References

[AVMA.org, Disease Precautions for Outdoor Enthusiasts and Their Companion Animals \(Archived\)](#).

^{1, 2} [AVMA.org](#)
