

Keep Your Family, Pets Safe This Fourth of July

DOVER – For many, this year’s Fourth of July activities will span the entire week and weekend, and include picnics, barbecues, beach days and other gatherings spent with friends and family (including our four-legged family members). The Delaware Division of Public Health (DPH) is providing the following tips to keep everyone safe.

Prevent foodborne illness:

As temperatures rise, so do your chances of contracting a foodborne illness if you do not properly handle and sanitize your food. Be mindful of keeping food out in the hot sun too long and follow the proper procedures for cooking meats and poultry. When bringing food to a picnic or cookout:

- Use an insulated cooler filled with ice or frozen gel packs. Frozen food can also be used as a cold source.
- Foods that need to be kept cold include raw meat, poultry, and seafood; deli and luncheon meats or sandwiches; summer salads (tuna, chicken, egg, pasta, potato or seafood); cut up vegetables and fruits, especially melons; and perishable dairy products.



- A full cooler will maintain its cold temperature longer than a partially filled one. When using a cooler, keep it out of the direct sun by placing it in the shade or shelter. Avoid opening the cooler repeatedly so that your food stays colder longer when hosting an outdoor event.
- Before cooking, keep meats and eggs in a container under 40 degrees F, keeping ice for beverages in a separate container.

- Refrigerate cold foods until they're ready to be served, keeping them on ice once they are out in the open.
- Have a food thermometer on hand so you can be sure you are cooking meats to their required temperature.
- Burgers and sausage should be cooked to 160 degrees F; chicken and turkey should be cooked to 165 degrees F; and steaks should be cooked to 145 degrees F with a three-minute rest time.
- Food should not be left out longer than two hours (one hour if the temperature is above 90 degrees F).

For more food safety tips, visit www.dhss.delaware.gov/dph/hsp/foodsafety.html or Foodsafety.gov.

Stay sun safe:

Sunburn slows the skin's ability to cool itself, and is linked to skin cancer. Protect your, and your children's, skin by taking the following steps:

- Use a broad-spectrum sunscreen with SPF 30+ and reapply regularly every two hours or after swimming.
- Wear UV-blocking sunglasses to protect your eyes. Wear wide-brimmed hats to cover your head, face, neck, and ears. Wear long-sleeved shirts and pants for optimal protection against the sun's rays.
- Limit sun exposure when UV rays are most dangerous, from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

For more sun safety tips, visit <https://www.protectyourskin.de.com/>.

Avoid bug bites:

Mosquitoes and ticks are active in the summer, and both can transmit serious illnesses through their bites. While spending

time outdoors, prevent mosquito and tick bites.

- Use Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-registered insect repellents. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for reapplication times. When using sunscreen, apply it first and insect repellent second. Adults: Spray insect repellent onto your hands and then apply to the child's face. Do not apply insect repellent onto a child's hands, eyes, mouth, or on cut or irritated skin. Do not use insect repellent on babies younger than 2 months of age.
- Wear light-colored, long-sleeved shirts and pants. Mosquito netting can protect one's face and neck, and infants in carriages, strollers and playpens.
- Prevent mosquitoes from entering the house by using screens and keeping windows and doorways tightly sealed.

Protect your pets from fireworks and loud noises:

The DPH Office of Animal Welfare (OAW) advises pet owners to be aware that fireworks cause many pets to run away, and that holiday foods and heat can be harmful to our four-legged family members. The following tips from the American Veterinary Medical Association can help keep pets safe from harm during Independence Day celebrations:

- If your pet is sensitive to noises like fireworks or thunder, consult your veterinarian for recommendations on how to ease anxiety caused by fireworks and loud parties. Anxiety medications and treats, "thunder" shirts and behavioral training are all tools to help keep pets calm.
- Leave pets at home if attending gatherings elsewhere. In addition to fireworks, strange places and crowds can spook an animal and cause them to flee. Utilize a crate or escape-proof area of the home during parties and fireworks.
- Those who expect guests during the holiday, or any celebration, should inform their company to be mindful of pets

when entering or exiting a home or yard to avoid accidental escapes. Place signs on doors and gates that alert guests to be vigilant about pets.

- Tell guests to refrain from sharing food meant for people as these can upset your pets' stomach, or worse. After any in-home celebrations, check yards for food scraps and fireworks debris that animals may ingest.
- Make sure sparklers, glow sticks, fireworks, charcoal and skewers are out of your pets' reach.
- Stay vigilant about times when pets are outdoors. Pets are safest inside on hot and humid days. If they must be outside, ensure they have access to fresh water and secondary shade apart from dog and cat enclosures, which can become dangerously hot inside.
- Make sure your pets have identification tags with current owner contact information. Have your pet microchipped, if they aren't already. A microchip is an affordable device with owner information to ensure pets can return home if they get out and are found by someone else. Make sure the microchip is registered with up-to-date owner contact information.
- If a pet does escape, post its photo and identifying information on the Office of Animal Welfare's statewide Lost & Found Pet Registry, at animalservices.delaware.gov. Review found pet notices there as well. Your pet may have been found by a neighbor or taken to a local animal shelter.

A person who is deaf, hard-of-hearing, deaf-blind or speech-disabled can call the DPH phone number above by using TTY services. Dial 7-1-1 or 800-232-5460 to type your conversation to a relay operator, who reads your conversation to a hearing person at DPH. The relay operator types the hearing person's spoken words back to the TTY user. To learn more about TTY availability in Delaware, visit <http://delawarerelay.com>.

The Delaware Department of Health and Social Services is committed to improving the quality of the lives of Delaware's citizens by promoting health and well-being, fostering self-sufficiency, and protecting vulnerable populations. DPH, a division of DHSS, urges Delawareans to make healthier choices with the 5-2-1 Almost None campaign: eat 5 or more fruits and vegetables each day, have no more than 2 hours of recreational screen time each day (includes TV, computer, gaming), get 1 or more hours of physical activity each day, and drink almost no sugary beverages.