

Authorities cracking down on pets left in cars

El Dorado County Animal Services is advising pet owners to not leave dogs, cats or other pets unattended in vehicles during hot weather.

California law allows animal services officers to take swift action to help an animal that may be in danger, including those left inside vehicles on a hot day. People could face fines up to \$500 and/or up to six months in jail, including possible felony charges if the pet is severely harmed or dies.

“Last week alone, 13 calls came into Animal Services about pets in hot vehicles in El Dorado County,” said Henry Brzezinski, chief of Animal Services, said in a statement. “Anyone who sees an animal in distress in a hot car should write down the vehicle license plate number and state of the plate, the make, model and color of the vehicle, and the type of animal, and call us immediately. Our officers will respond and attempt to locate the owner. If the animal is in immediate danger, our officers will remove the animal for its safety. If necessary, the animal will be transported to a veterinary hospital.”

When it's 80 degrees or higher outside, temperatures inside a vehicle can reach 120 degrees or more in 10 to 20 minutes, even with the windows opened slightly. Heat stress or stroke, irreparable brain damage and death can follow shortly thereafter.

To report a pet in distress, call 530.621.5795 on the West Slope or 530.573.7925 in South Lake Tahoe.