

This year we had a really mild winter without many freezing temperatures or snow. How will this unusually warm weather affect my pets and is there anything I need to do differently as we transition into spring? I have 2 dogs and also a cat that goes outside.

This has been an incredibly mild winter in our area and we are transitioning into spring earlier than usual. Our biggest concern will be fleas and ticks, allergies and heat stroke.

Without a consistent run of freezing nights this winter, the ticks never died off. We are expecting the tick numbers to be higher this year and for ticks to be a problem sooner than normal. If you stopped tick prevention treatments in the winter, it would be a good idea to start again now. We were still seeing ticks in February which is very unusual and a problem in households that discontinued tick prevention over the winter. We are concerned that the tick numbers will be high and will be watching for this as it could mean more cases of Lyme disease, Ehrlichiosis and other diseases spread by ticks.

Fleas are another pest of concern. Most tick products are also effective against fleas so it is a good idea to make sure your pets are protected from both. Dogs and cats allergic to fleas may have a tougher time this spring and summer if you aren't using a product that prevents the fleas from taking an initial bite. Discuss which preventatives are effective for flea allergy dermatitis and which product might be the safest for a dog and cat household.

The trees and flowers in our area are starting to bloom which means pollens will be released soon. These pollens can cause allergies in our pets. If your cat or dogs have had seasonal allergies in the past, you can expect them to start sooner this year and they may be more severe than usual. Signs of seasonal allergies include licking and chewing paws, scratching ears, and scratching at the face. If you are seeing these signs already, give your veterinarian a call to see what can be done as they can develop into a skin or ear infection very quickly.

One last concern for this early spring is heat stroke in our pets. Even though it's only March, it is too warm out to leave your pet in the car. Leaving the windows down with pets inside may not even be enough as the temperature in the car is still able to quickly rise. Also, make sure you have enough water for your pets when outside and also ensure they have an area with shade if they are going to be outside for extended periods of time.

We are all very excited about the nice weather we are having and this is a great time for your pets to be outside playing as well. By preparing for an early onslaught of fleas and ticks, watching for signs of seasonal allergies and preventing heat stroke, you and your pets will be able to enjoy a happy spring and summer.

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