

## Don't Let Poor Air Quality Hurt Your Dog

**A pet expert offers tips for dog owners experiencing poor air quality.**

Posted: June 1, 2007, 5 a.m. EST

Many people in areas of North America have seen air quality indexes downgraded to unhealthy status in recent weeks, due in part to wildfires in the U.S. and eastern Canada. Many forget that the poor air quality affects dogs as well as people.

“Getting your dog out into the sun is important because it’s the best source of Vitamin D for your pet, but spending too much time outdoors in poor air quality conditions can be a serious hazard for your dog,” says pet expert Jamie Wolf.

“Many older dogs have unidentified breathing problems that can be magnified during periods of poor air quality,” says Wolf, founder of Rescue Rehab Home, a facility that cares for injured, neglected and discarded dogs.

“This is a very important issue that pet owner’s need to be educated on. Poor air quality conditions strike nationwide for a variety of reasons and almost any pet can be affected by them. There are things dog owners can do in times of poor air quality,” says Wolf.

Among the tips Wolf has for dog owners experiencing poor air quality: Remember that if you feel uncomfortable outside, your dog is affected much more than you are. Don’t wait until you begin feeling affected by poor air conditions, because it may already be causing your dog discomfort. Check with your county periodically to get updates on air quality. To keep dogs active and their muscles strong during periods of prolonged poor air quality, try setting up stairs at home. You can use existing stairs in your home or buy specialty stairs made for small animals. The exercise is good for building chest and thigh muscles. The smaller the dog, the more susceptible they are during periods of poor air quality. So, in these cases, try not to take dogs outside at all. Instead, try using pads indoors so they can go potty inside the house. Litter may also work for short periods. If your dog has breathing problems, try using a nebulizer after coming in from the outdoors to open their air passageways. However, be sure to consult your vet before first-time nebulizer use. The herb Slippery Elm, which tastes like nuts, can keep the respiratory tract healthy. It comes in capsules, powder, tea, and glycerin elixir. Use the adult dose for big dogs, half a dose for medium dogs and a fourth of a dose for small dogs.

For more health tips, visit DogChannel's Dog Care section.