

Vets warn about swimming pool safety for dogs

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Vets working in the Veterinary Teaching Hospital at Murdoch University are concerned that the numbers of dogs dying or suffering near drowning incidents in swimming pools may be on the rise.

While no exact statistics are available, Pauline Wilson from Perth Pet Cremations reports that it is cremating on average two [dogs](#) a week after they have drowned in pools.

Murdoch Pet Emergency Centre (MPEC) Senior Registrar Dr Ryan Ong said that at that rate, up to 200 dogs per year could be drowning in Perth [swimming pools](#).

"This is a concerning figure," he said. "The national figure for people drowning in Australian waterways in 2011-2012 was 284.

"These figures suggest that dog owners may not realise the need to be watching out for their pets like they do their children when it comes to safety around water."

Dr Ong added that many people believed dogs have a natural ability to swim, but this was not true.

"Some dogs paddle better than others and some dogs sink like a stone. Generally, heavy dogs with short legs tend to find swimming a real challenge," Dr Ong said.

"Similar to children, pets should never be left unsupervised around deep water. The fenced pool area should not be used as a dog yard. If your dog is old, or has a heart condition or a seizure disorder, keep them away from the pool."

Dr Ong added that unsecured solar pool blankets are a hazard as dogs falling into the water can get trapped and disoriented making it hard for them to find the steps to get out of the pool. In addition, the weight of the blanket can push them under the water.

"If your dog likes to swim in the pool with the family, make sure one of the first things it learns is how to get out of the pool," said Dr Ong. "If they have to be in the pool area, ensure that the pool blanket is off or a secure cover or netting is used to cover the pool and prevent them from falling in. If you are going out on the water with your dog, consider a doggie life jacket especially if they are not strong swimmers."

Veterinary assistance should still be sought for dogs that are rescued from the pool after having a near drowning incident. Complications including hypothermia, pneumonia or fluid build-up in the lungs can occur.

Provided by Murdoch University

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