

Wildfires, Smoke, You and Your Pets

As was the case these last few years, we can always expect to be adversely affected by smoke from wildfires in other regions. This poor air quality impacts not only ourselves—the young, the old, the infirm and those with breathing problems—but also animals and specifically our pets.

Even if the fire danger is not imminent, high levels of smoke may force you to stay indoors or, at the least, reduce your outdoor activities. So, here's some ideas to reduce your exposure to wildfire smoke.

- * For an air conditioning system or a room air conditioner, use high efficiency filters to capture fine smoke particulates.
- * Create a clean room in your house with a portable air cleaner.
- * To keep indoor air clean, avoid frying or broiling foods, vacuuming, or burning candles, using a fireplace or woodstove, or smoking tobacco products.
- * Spend less time outdoors and limit physical activities
- * Wear facemasks rated N95 or better to reduce exposure. (Note that people with chronic respiratory, cardiac, or other medical conditions that make breathing difficult should check with their healthcare provider before using an N95 respirator because the N95 respirator can make it more difficult for the wearer to breathe.)

What about our pets? If you feel the effects of smoke, they will too. Smoke can irritate your pet's eyes and respiratory tract. Animals with heart or lung disease and older pets are especially at risk from smoke and should be closely watched.

Know the signs of a pet's distress and, if necessary, contact your veterinarian.

- * **Coughing or gagging**
- * **Red or watery eyes**
- * **Nasal discharge**
- * **Trouble breathing or noisy or fast breathing**
- * **Fatigue or weakness or disorientation**
- * **Uneven gait or stumbling**
- * **Reduced appetite or thirst**

Use the same precautions for your pets as for yourself. When it's smoky, keep your pets indoors, with doors and windows closed. Let dogs and cats outside only briefly. Smoke is especially tough on your pet birds. Keep them inside when smoke is present.

This year look to your home and consider what needs to be done to protect yourself, your loved ones and your pets from smoke pollution. Please do it now before the fire season is upon us.

This information is condensed from EPA and FDA bulletins and the American Veterinary Medical Association website. Sent as a courtesy by your Dominican Black Canyon Neighborhood Association.

