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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Charlottesville-Albemarle SPCA Highlights Heat Awareness Day, Encourages Owners to Stay Vigilant This Summer

CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA (May 30, 2024) — As summer approaches and temperatures rise, the Charlottesville-Albemarle SPCA is emphasizing the critical importance of protecting pets from heat exposure on Heat Awareness Day, Friday, May 31st. Pet owners are encouraged to stay vigilant about the temperature and take necessary precautions to ensure their pets' safety and well-being during the hot and humid months.

Ensuring pets have plenty of fresh, clean water is crucial, as they can become dehydrated quickly in hot weather. It is recommended to keep walks brief during the hottest parts of the day, typically midday, to minimize heat exposure. Instead, utilize the cooler parts of the day, such as the morning and evening, for walking or exercising your dog. Pets with flat faces, like Pugs and Persian cats, are particularly susceptible to heat stroke since they cannot pant as effectively. These pets, along with the elderly, overweight, and those with heart or lung diseases, should be kept cool in air-conditioned rooms as much as possible.

Owners should be aware of the symptoms of overheating in pets, which include excessive panting or difficulty breathing, increased heart and respiratory rates, drooling, mild weakness, stupor, or collapse. Severe symptoms can include seizures, bloody diarrhea, vomiting, and an elevated body temperature of over 104 degrees. If you notice any of these signs, please contact your veterinarian or take your pet to an emergency veterinary hospital immediately.

It is crucial never to leave animals alone in a parked vehicle. In 2023, data showed that over 160 companion animals endured heat-related deaths. Pet owners should avoid taking their dogs in the car unnecessarily to prevent situations where they are left in a hot vehicle; and remember that the temperature inside a parked car can rise almost 20° F in just 10 minutes and almost 30° F in 20 minutes.

Another important precaution is to avoid letting dogs linger on hot asphalt during high temperatures. "Being so close to the ground, your dog's body can heat up quickly, and their sensitive paw pads can burn," Luke Waldron, Director of Communications for the

Charlottesville-Albemarle SPCA explained. "A good rule of thumb, or rather, 'rule of paw,' is if the pavement feels too hot for your own bare feet, it's too hot for your dog's paws. An easy test is to press your bare hands on the pavement for at least 7-8 seconds to assess the heat level."

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About the Charlottesville-Albemarle SPCA: *The Charlottesville-Albemarle SPCA is proud to have maintained the City of Charlottesville and Albemarle County as life-saving communities for thousands of animals in the region. The mission of the SPCA is to advance the compassionate treatment of animals by providing sheltering, medical care and behavioral services for dogs and cats; promoting permanent, caring homes; and furthering education and outreach to place healthy animals in caring homes.*