

Pond and Water Garden Dangers

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Just when you thought it was safe to go back in the water....

Okay, so no real worries about sharks unless you have one of the rare surfing dogs, but other concerns follow summer activities and water loving dogs.

The Home Water Garden

If you've had thoughts about creating a beautiful water garden, then you need to also be aware of a few issues that might affect your dog:

- **Mycobacterium Marinum:** Mycobacteriosis is a leading bacterial infection related to aquariums or fish water. It often occurs in crowded water environments. It enters through an open crack in the skin and leads to a variety of skin lesions.
- **Campylobacter:** These bacteria create the infection campylobacteriosis, which is one of the leading bacterial infections to cause intestinal upset and diarrhea. While this also occurs in contaminated natural ponds, a buildup of fish, amphibian, and reptile waste in a water garden can infect a dog that drinks the water.
- **Chemicals and Fertilizers:** All water gardens with plants require fertilizers and water chemicals. Many chemicals used to treat algae overgrowth or maintain the water are not healthy for a dog's consumption.
- **Electrocution:** Ensure that all filtration equipment and electrical cording is well concealed from a curious dog.
- **Drowning:** Most home water gardens do not have steps or ways to get in and out of the pond. Too many curious dogs fall into ponds each year.

To insure safety in a water garden, make sure to install filtration systems to keep water flowing. Don't overcrowd the fish environment to keep wastes to a minimum and regularly maintain your pond with any necessary water changes/adding of clean water.

The Natural Pond

There are even more risks when you enter the wilderness. The pond might look like a refreshing place to cool off or play in, but there are bacteria, protozoa, and other safety issues lurking within.

Natural ponds are frequented by wildlife, and with wildlife come a range of problems. Most of these ponds have been contaminated with wildlife feces and urine, and when your dog drinks the water, he may develop diarrhea, fever, and lethargy.

A few of the most common problems to come from contaminated water:

- **Giardia:** This is a protozoan that is easily transmitted from wildlife through feces. Once inside your pet, it can cause a long lasting bout of diarrhea that will need to be confirmed through stool samples by your vet.
- **Coccidia:** Coccidiosis in dogs is caused by the Coccidia protozoan. It can lay dormant within a dog's intestines for a long time, and it is easily transmitted from dog to dog through feces contact. It, too, causes diarrhea and may take several tries by a veterinarian to be accurately diagnosed.
- **Leptospirosis:** Natural waters contaminated with infected urine from wild animals like raccoons can cause your dog to become very ill. Luckily, there is a vaccination you can give your dog to prevent this occur-

rence.

- Tularemia: Another bacterial infection caused by waste from wild animals.
- Wild pond waters can also contain the campylobacter and mycobacterium marinum.

In addition to bacteria and protozoa passed on from wild animals, you also need to be careful about possible fertilizer runoff and harmful chemicals. Many natural ponds occur in rural or farmlands where fertilizer runoff is quite common.

If your dog insists on swimming in ponds, attempt to keep your pet from drinking the water by providing a lot of fresh, clean water for him. Watch for any signs of diarrhea, fever, lethargy, or any other changes in your dog.

Important Commands Your Dog Should Know

While you may not be able to avoid all the dangers, there are some commands that all dogs should know that will assist you with the prevention of potential problems.

Make sure your dog has a good understanding of and is reliable with:

1. **Leave it:** This will help you keep your dog from something potentially dangerous or just plain icky.
2. **Drop it/Give:** In case he finds a dead animal or feces and tries to eat it, a good Drop it will keep him from ingesting it all.
3. **Come:** Come is a great way to interrupt something a dog is doing. Rather than yelling 'No,' try to reframe it for him by giving him an alternate behavior to do. Training come to a sound, like a whistle, is an excellent option for off leash work or working at a distance.
4. **Stay or Wait:** Either of these commands can keep your dog at bay in case a surprise animal appears or you need to keep him back from a potential problem.

All dogs can enjoy the outdoors but stay safe by knowing the pond related risks and how to deal with them.