

Dog Dies When Left in Overheated Vehicle

Fort Myers, Florida, 8/3/10—On August 2, 2010 Lee County Domestic Animal Services received an emergency call regarding a dog left in an unattended vehicle at HealthPark Medical Center in Fort Myers. An officer arrived within minutes but was unable to resuscitate the small poodle mix. The dog's temperature registered 115 degrees (the maximum temperature of the thermometer). The owner and several friends and family members reported they drove from Tallahassee to visit a sick relative. They admitted leaving the dog inside the car for over two hours. The owner was cited for animal cruelty with a mandatory court appearance.

Ironically this incident occurred the same day that the nationally syndicated column, "Dear Abby," warned readers of the dangers of leaving dogs in overheated vehicles. Lee County Domestic Animal Services also strongly advises pet owners not to ever leave an animal in a car even for just a short period of time. On a mild day with outside temperatures in the low 70s, the inside of a car can reach 120 degrees within minutes. When temperatures are in the 90s outside, as they were at Health Park on August 2nd, the inside temperature of a parked car can rise to over 160 degrees causing permanent brain damage and obviously death. Cracking a window has little to no effect on the inside temperature of the car.

"It's always frustrating when something so easily preventable takes the life of a pet," says Adam Leath, Chief of Animal Control. "There's simply no way to excuse this type of neglect when it should be obvious that no one, human or pet, could survive exposure to such extreme temperatures for so long," he adds. Leath advises anyone who sees an animal left in a parked car to call Animal Services or police immediately as well as to go to nearby stores to see if an owner can be located quickly.

To report animal neglect and abuse or for more information about pet safety call Lee County Domestic Animal Services at (239) 533-7387 (LEE-PETS) or online go to <http://www.LeeLostPets.com>