

Media Release



The Hon Jaala Pulford MLC

Minister for Agriculture

Minister for Regional Development

Deputy Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council

Saturday, 7 January, 2017

PETS IN HOT CARS ARE NOT COOL

The Andrews Labor Government is taking action to prevent animal abuse in hot weather by updating its animal welfare legislation to ensure Inspectors can crack down on cruelty even faster this summer.

Minister for Agriculture, Jaala Pulford, is also sounding a warning to pet owners who neglect their furry loved ones by leaving them in cars during extreme heat.

Causing animals to suffer can be a criminal offence and if your pet suffers as a result of being left in a car, you can be fined up to \$77,730 or face two years imprisonment if found guilty.

Strengthening Victoria's animal welfare legislation with new powers serves as a cautionary reminder to anyone with an animal in their care to take responsibility for ensuring its safety and welfare, particularly during extreme heat which sees cases of animal neglect peak in summer.

Inspectors were previously restricted to whom they could give a formal 'notice to comply' under animal welfare laws.

Recent changes to the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act* (POCTA) legislation enacted by the Labor Government are now in effect, meaning Agriculture Victoria officers, Victoria Police and RSPCA Inspectors all have the authority to issue a notice to anyone in the community who commits or is likely to commit a cruelty offence – not just the owner of the animals.

Where pets are found in situations that will result in them being in a hot car, Victoria Police should be contacted immediately by phoning triple zero. Police officers have the power to break into a vehicle to rescue an animal suffering from heat exposure.

Livestock should not be handled or transported during extreme heat. If this is unavoidable, people should plan ahead to avoid handling or transporting their livestock during the hottest times of day, and must schedule access to water and frequent, shady rest stops.

Heat-stressed horses should be fed electrolytes and cooled down by hosing with cool water or placing wet towels over them.

Exercise pets in the cool of the day, do not walk dogs on hot paths or roads, and never leave an animal inside a parked car on a hot day.

More information about legal responsibilities, and tips for caring for animals in extreme heat, can be found at <http://agriculture.vic.gov.au/animalwelfare>.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Agriculture Jaala Pulford

"If an animal is in your care, it is your responsibility to make sure it doesn't suffer."

"Whether you have herds of cattle, a few riding horses or a couple of cats, it is incumbent upon you to look after your animals' welfare, especially in hot weather by providing plenty of water, feed and shade."

"Animal welfare is everyone's responsibility. That's why we have given animal welfare Inspectors greater powers to enforce our laws."

Media Contact: Tom Whitty 0488 084 717 | Tom.Whitty@minstaff.vic.gov.au