

## **Safety Tips**

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### **Fire Prevention.**

- Do you have smoke alarms in the house or kennel? Then do you replace batteries at the recommended interval?
- Do you have a smoke alarm as part of a house protection system (it too needs battery changing)?
- Does your dog have free dog door access to a fenced yard? If so the dog still might not spontaneously go outside in the event of a fire or smoke. If you're lucky and the fire causes cans of paint or other combustibles to explode, and your Beardie(s) is fearful of loud unexpected noises – then the dog likely will depart the house and be saved. Our dear Heather survived a house fire because of that; a companion PWD succumbed to smoke inhalation.
- Do you have decals on the windows and doors telling fire department personnel that you have dogs and how many in the house?
- Do your neighbors know how many dogs you have and where they are normally in the house when you're gone?

Give consideration to how many of answers are yes or no and strive to have more yeses where practical.

**Yard Gates.** If you have a fenced yard(s), then you likely have gates for access to the yard area(s).

- Are the fence posts sturdy and solidly in the ground?
- Do you have a chain around the gate and fence post or just a latch (if a latch is that sturdy)?
- Is the chain sturdy?
- Do you have the chain or latch locked?
- Is the chain or latch locked some of the time or all of the time?
- Is the lock heavy duty?

Those gates or latches need a lock and a sturdy one that is difficult to cut through with a bolt cutter (Master Lock comes to mind; other brands also advertise sturdiness). Otherwise, if you let a dog out or someone inadvertently lets a house door open and the dog runs out, a disaster could be in the waiting because of an open gate. Gates get left open by a lot of people and gates can blow open in a storm, too. Dogs go through open gates to the outer world where all sorts of hazards abound.

Yes, determined thieves can cut their way through some locks with a heavy duty bolt cutter; but the presence of a lock is a deterrent. If service people must enter the fenced area to read meters, then try to work out an arrangement that will be safe. For our cattle pasture where the electric meter reader must go monthly in the summer because we use electricity to run an irrigation pump, the gate is double locked and the reader uses the company key/lock to go in and out –closing the gate upon entry and exit.

## **Heating Lamps.**

If you use heating lamps to keep very young pups warm, use great caution. Read the following from Linda Aronson, DVM (first on BDL, then in *Lighting the Way*, fall 2008).

Today we had a fire and it could have been a tragedy. I wanted to let everyone know what happened, because it came as a shock to me. Because we didn't want to turn the heat on in the house but have had some chilly nights I had rigged up my puppy heat lamp over the parrot's cage so that he would not get cold. We've done this before. The arm of the lamp is secured over the top of a speaker above his cage which is in the kitchen, the lamp hangs from the hook, and while I did worry about dogs banging into the cord, it is pretty tight to the wall and goes straight up, they never had and I was sure if they did the arm would clatter down and alert us. My husband left for work, and all but one of the dogs and the cat were upstairs with me.

I came downstairs not three minutes later, I smelled smoke. Either the dog or cat must, in that short time, have stumbled into the cord and knocked the lamp down, but the hook and stand hadn't shifted at all! In that short time the lamp had burned through the oak floor and into the sub-flooring. I instantly unplugged the lamp and removed it. I then called the fire department as I was worried there might be some smoldering. Lucky it was a holiday as ours is a volunteer department, and they were here in about 5 minutes. The heat in the floor was still intense. Even when they had removed the burnt wood and doused the area with water, they were still registering close to 200 F. There was never enough smoke to set off the smoke detector. (The parrot was making smoke detector beepings, and fooled the firemen into thinking that was what they were hearing!)

Many breeders set up heat lamps for the first couple of weeks of puppies' lives. They are often over wooden or plastic whelping boxes or flammable bedding. I won't be replacing my heat lamp. I'll find another heater for the bird, I rarely used it for the puppies, just when the bitch was away and it was cold out. The photographer for the fire department was telling me about some other freak fires - his cat had turned on an old stove in his basement and set it on fire, dozens of dryer fires, heat lamps for small rodents and fish.

We hear the warnings, but what was scary was the speed with which this all happened. Even the firemen were amazed. If I'd stayed upstairs a little longer or left the house, and I have although the dogs are kept in runs when we're all gone, I might have lost all my animals, my house and not be writing to tell everyone my experience. Since the post I have heard of two houses burnt to the ground as a result of heat lamp fires. In one all people and animals perished. In the other the breeder's mother escaped with the 11 puppies, but they died one by one of smoke inhalation. All the adult bitches and other animals died in the fire. In one a garage and puppies burned to the ground. The one happy ending, the bitch moved all her puppies to the owner's bed. The owner found her doing this and was able to put out the fire with minimal damage

### **Vehicle Radiators.**

- Do you live where you need antifreeze in your vehicle's radiator?
- Do you have a leaky radiator?
- Where do you store your antifreeze if you put it into the radiator yourself?
- Do visitors with leaky radiators park where your dogs could access the leaked fluid?

There are different types of antifreezes; all contain ethylene glycol which can be lethal to dogs; it is sweet and dogs have no difficulty licking sweets.

### **Secure Collar and Leash and Handling Dogs in Open Spaces.**

- Is the dog's collar on sufficiently tight that it stays around the dog's neck if the dog suddenly pulls away?
- Is the leash snapped properly onto the collar ring **BEFORE** you open a house or car door, or crate, if you're going into open space?
- Is your dog reliable to a stop or down command if released inadvertently into open space?
- Are you handling a new puppy or rescue or rehomed dog who is unfamiliar with the setting you're exposing it to?
- Does everyone in the household understand the necessity of preventing the dog gaining access to open space and able to act reliably on that knowledge at all times?
- Some may have dogs that are completely reliable without restraint. Wonderful – then you don't need to worry about this issue.

### **Bromethalin.**

This is a new rodenticide with no antidote and no test to identify it (other than necropsy). Below are a couple of paragraphs from this link – it is a must read!

<http://veterinarynews.dvm360.com/dvm/Toxicology/New-rodenticide-without-antidote-alarms-pet-toxico/ArticleStandard/Article/detail/804032?contextCategoryId=40534>

“...The ingested substance may be bromethalin, the new toxin of choice for rodenticide manufacturers. There is no test save necropsy to detect its presence--and no antidote.

Why are manufacturers switching to bromethalin? Because in 2008 the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued a decision prohibiting the use of second-generation or long-acting anticoagulants in residential settings. Manufacturers became compliant with these new regulations in 2011, with many using bromethalin instead of anticoagulants in their products.”