

CANINE CORNER

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Dogs & climate change

With the devastating flood and slip events in the Auckland, Coromandel, Gisborne and Hawke's Bay regions, it's time to talk about our dogs and climate change.

The impacts of climate change will affect our dogs as much as us, with more severe droughts and heat, wildfires, more frequent and severe storms, and sea level rise. As this issue goes to press, the NZ Government is just beginning to talk about 'managed retreat' from vulnerable locations. People and their pets will increasingly face the prospect of re-settlement in the future if they are living in susceptible areas.

Longer term, we can expect that with more extreme heat, dog breeds which are vulnerable to heat will face a more difficult time. Those few peak summer days when you cannot currently exercise your dog are likely to become more frequent, too.

Warmer temperatures will create environments for fleas, ticks and mosquitoes to thrive, not only causing increased risks of human diseases, but also those in dogs. One model predicts that mosquitoes that carry disease could reach our shores simply because of rising temperatures.

Emergency preparation

While it all sounds disheartening, there are things that dog owners can do right now.

A good place to start is to review your evacuation plan, or create one if you do not currently have one for your household. As the recent storms have shown, people must act quickly during emergencies and take the initiative to evacuate safely.

Every household should have an emergency supply kit. I know many

of my clients in Christchurch took the opportunity to review their supplies after seeing the news of the destruction in the North Island. Supplies for your dogs include food, medications, poo bags, a coat, bedding and muzzle, first aid supplies, a collar or harness and lead.

Your carbon footprint

As consumer choice drives the demand for products and services, it's also time to start thinking about your carbon footprint and your dog's carbon pawprint.

Buying foods produced in New Zealand will reduce footprints by reducing the emissions associated with the transport of goods. There are many NZ-made dog foods now (including raw), removing the need to rely on imported brands. Opting out of plastic bowls in favour of more durable stainless steel is another example, as is replacing plastic poo bags with ones that are degradable. In fact, reducing use of plastics in all aspects of your dog's life will help reduce emissions associated with plastic production plus reduce landfill waste: most plastics are not recyclable and virtually all plastics degrade in the recycling process, unlike metals.

The pet industries, like many others, are starting to jump on the climate change bandwagon with efforts to calculate carbon footprints so that the effect of reduction efforts can be measured. In November 2022, for example, a Veterinary Carbon Calculator was launched in the UK which tailors carbon calculations to the operations of veterinary practices.

Our dogs are alongside us for so many life events, and that includes climate change. The time to prepare and act is now.

Every bit helps. 🐾

