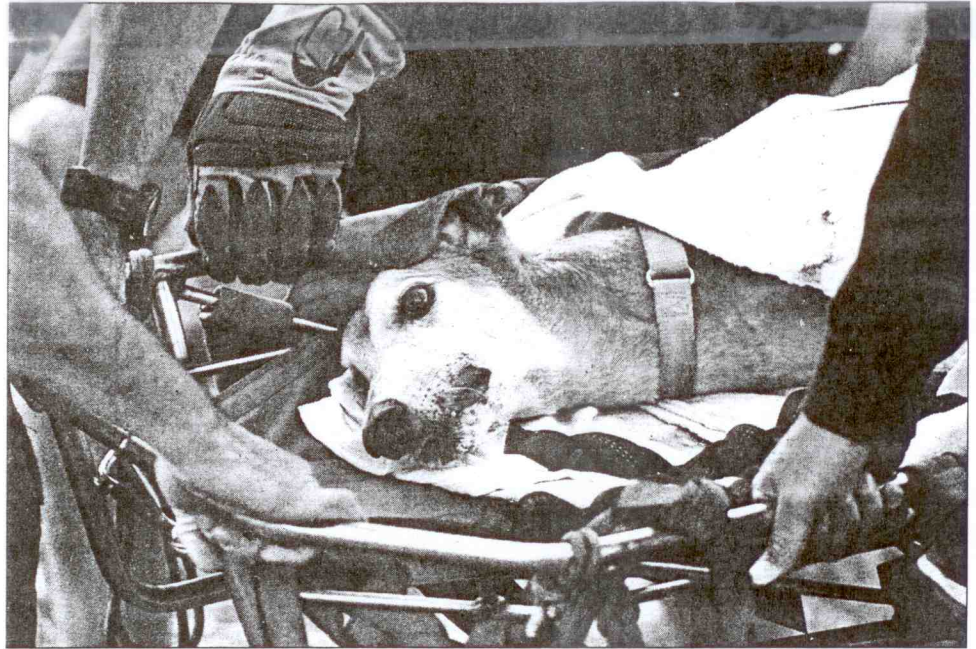


AN 80-POUND GREYHOUND, Duke, is tended to by Sedona Fire District firefighters April 23 after he collapsed from dehydration on Bear Mountain and was carried out from the trail. Duke, from Phoenix, wasn't used to hiking, and his paws were torn up from the rocky terrain. His owner later discovered Duke has a weak heart and wasn't expected to make it.

Photo courtesy of Jayson Coil



Dogs willingly suffer for master's hike

By Alison Ecklund
LARSON NEWSPAPERS

Dogs love to hike. They hit the trail exploring, sniffing out who's already passed, what animals live nearby and if there's anything worth eating or chasing.

Sedona's trails are filled with dogs of all breeds, ages and sizes zig-zagging through the brush, bounding ahead of their owners or following close with a leash.

Dogs love the freedom and adventure Sedona's wide web of trails provide, and they also love their owners. According to Humane Society of Sedona Shelter Manager Gary DeGeronimo, hikers need to know that their dogs will keep up with them, no matter what.

"The love that a dog has for you and the want it has to be with you is so deep that they'll stay with you even when they're not capable," he said. "They'll suffer afterward."

On April 23, the Sedona Fire District rescued a dog whose owner later said probably won't make it.

SFD was called to Bear Mountain to rescue a greyhound that had collapsed from dehydration.

Crews arrived after 6 p.m. and found Duke and his owner, both

from Phoenix, close enough to see the trailhead, but the man was unable to carry the 80-pound dog out.

According to Battalion Chief Jayson Coil, Duke's paws were torn up and bleeding so badly that he was missing a pad from each paw and his dewclaw on his right, front leg was torn off.

"The dog's pads weren't conditioned for trails," Coil said. "He hadn't been hiking off route like that."

Crews carried Duke out in a stokes basket and put wet towels on his body to cool him off. They applied an oxygen mask, made to fit a dog's muzzle, and allowed him to drink small amounts of water. They also cleaned and bandaged his paws.

Duke's owner called Coil later, stating that veterinarians discovered Duke has a weak heart that prohibits him from hiking. He remained at the clinic and the veterinarians weren't optimistic.

Hydration is important for people and just as important for dogs, DeGeronimo said. "Dogs need water just as well, only dogs can't say, 'Can we stop for a drink?'"

Sedona veterinarian Kristina Ingram sees a lot of heat stroke, dehydration and abrasions on paws, she said, especially on "weekend warriors" whose feet

aren't used to the rocky terrain.

Ingram suggests building dogs' endurance and toughening their pads little by little before embarking on longer hikes and always give them plenty of water.

Dogs ventilate through heavy breathing, DeGeronimo said. They also sweat through their paws, so if the pads are dry, they could be dehydrated.

Another test to determine dehydration is to pull up the skin on their necks. If the skin stays up, the dog is dehydrated, he said.

"It's common sense. We need water, they need water," he said.

Ingram suggests keeping dogs on a leash during long hikes to keep them from running back and forth, doubling their distance along the way.

If a dog seems dehydrated, soak a towel in water and put it on the dog's body to cool the dog down, DeGeronimo said, and take the dog to the vet immediately.

For dogs whose pads aren't tough enough for rocky trails or for walking on hot pavement, DeGeronimo encourages owners to buy booties for their four-legged friends or apply a waxy product that toughens their pads.

Snakes pose another threat on the trails, DeGeronimo said.

Dogs can go to training that helps teach them to stay away from snakes, but DeGeronimo suggests owners look into who's teaching it and what the training consists of before signing up their dog.

There is also a shot dogs can get that gives them more time to get to a vet if they are ever bitten by a snake, he said.

A mandatory precaution for keeping a dog safe on hikes is a rabies shot.

"If you live in the city of Sedona, you're dog must be licensed. If he's licensed, he has to have a rabies shot," he said. "Beyond the law, it's common sense."

If a dog without a rabies shot is attacked by a wild animal or bites someone, the owner must pay to have him quarantined until it's determined whether or not he has rabies.

"In reality, there are a lot of dangers out there. You should examine your dog while you're hiking every once in a while for stickies or cactus needles," DeGeronimo said. "Don't let your dog disappear from you. It could be setting your dog up for some kind of danger."

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