

NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

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Event Alert and Photo Opportunity

The Oklahoma County Tobacco Use Prevention Coalition
Education outreach on the dangers to pets from secondhand smoke
Dachshund Dash – Sunday, April 18th at noon – Cox Convention Center

Secondhand smoke can damage pets' health Dogs with long noses at higher risk of nasal cancers

While the effects of secondhand smoke on human health are well known, there's also evidence that smoke-filled rooms can cause serious health problems for pets. "Most pet owners probably don't realize that if they smoke they're putting their pets at risk of debilitating and deadly diseases," says Mary Pointer of the Tobacco Use Prevention Coalition.

The Oklahoma County Tobacco Use Prevention Coalition will host a booth at the Dachshund Dash this Sunday to provide information for pet owners about the dangers to pets from secondhand smoke.

Research over the past twenty years has found that dogs and cats living in households with smokers may be at significantly higher risk from a variety of cancers. "Secondhand smoke can cause oral and nasal cancers, as well as malignant lymphoma in animals," says Oklahoma City veterinarian Dr. Richard Mauldin.

According to a study published in the *American Journal of Epidemiology*, dogs with long noses are the most vulnerable to developing nasal cancers associated with secondhand smoke. "That's one of the reasons we are reaching out to dachshund owners," Pointer says. "All pets may suffer health consequences from tobacco smoke exposure, but dachshunds and other long-nosed dogs appear to have a higher risk of nasal and sinus cavity cancers."

Short-nosed dogs are at greater risk of lung cancer from tobacco smoke. "In short-nosed dogs...less filtration of cigarette smoke occurs in the nasal cavity than in long-nosed breeds," says University of Massachusetts School of Public Health professor Elizabeth Bertone-Johnson, who conducted several studies on the effects of smoke on dogs and cats. That's why collies, greyhounds and Dobermans are more likely to get nasal cancers, whereas pugs, boxers and bulldogs are more susceptible to lung cancer.

Other research shows that cats may also be at much higher risk from oral cancers related to household tobacco smoke. That's partly because cats spend a lot of time grooming. When cigarette smoke settles out of the air, it can leave behind deposits of cancer-causing chemicals on floors, walls, furniture, bedding and cat fur. Scientists have identified more than 40 distinct mutagens and carcinogens in secondhand tobacco smoke.

To help celebrate "Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Month," the Oklahoma County Tobacco Use Prevention Coalition is making a special effort to help make the public aware of the dangers of secondhand smoke for pets.

"The best way to protect your pets from tobacco related diseases is to avoid smoking around them," Pointer says. "And of course it would be even better to avoid smoking altogether to protect your own health as well as the health of your pets."

For more information on the coalition or secondhand smoke, please call (405) 419-4247. For free help with your effort to quit tobacco use, please call the Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline at 1-800 QUIT NOW.

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