



## City of Ketchum

News Release  
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### **Police Could Remove Pets from Hot Cars Under Proposed Ordinance**

*More Than 20 Calls So Far This Year*

KETCHUM, Idaho – Ketchum police would have authority to remove endangered pets from vehicles on hot days if the City Council passes a proposed ordinance at its meeting on Monday, July 6, at 5:30 p.m.

Police have received more than 20 calls so far this year about dogs being locked in cars in hot weather, Police Chief David Kassner said.

The ordinance is needed, he explained, because Idaho law fails to give police explicit authority to enter a vehicle when an animal appears to be in danger.

Currently, if the department receives a call about an animal in possible danger, an officer will go to the vehicle and attempt to find the owner. The officer will enter the vehicle only if the animal appears to be in immediate danger, but will remain by the vehicle until the owner returns to discuss the situation.

The proposed ordinance would give officers legal authority to remove an animal, as well as guidelines calling for removal if the animal is frothing at the mouth or appears to be unable to move.

“Usually, it’s lack of education,” Community Service Officer Wes Whitesell said. “People don’t realize how quickly vehicles heat up.”

For example, he aimed the department’s scanner last week at the interior of a car that had been left in the sun in 84-degree weather for an hour. The scanner registered a temperature of 141 degrees on the front seat.

Although the department receives dozens of calls each summer, Ketchum police recall only one incident in which they entered a car, using a special device to unlock the door, to save a dog because they were unable to reach the owner. In this case, Kassner said, the owner was very happy that police had intervened. In all other cases, they have been able to locate owners before the situation became critical.

The proposed ordinance calls for a \$100 fine for a first offense and a \$250 fine for a subsequent offense if a person leaves “a companion animal unattended in a standing or parked vehicle in a manner or under conditions that endanger the animal’s safety or health.”

It gives police the authority to “use reasonable force under the above circumstances to enter a vehicle and remove the companion animal after first making a reasonable attempt to contact the animal’s owner. The officer removing the animal shall use reasonable means to contact the owner of the companion animal to arrange for its return home. Absent contact with the owner, the animal will be taken to a veterinary clinic if emergency care is needed and after a reasonable amount of time to the Animal Shelter of the Wood River Valley.”

“We expect the ordinance to pass, and we hope that other communities and the state legislature will follow our lead,” Mayor Nina Jonas said.

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Photo caption:

Ketchum Police Community Service Officer Wes Whitesell uses a special scanner to the check temperature inside a parked vehicle. The devices can measure interior temperatures even if the window is closed.

### **About the City of Ketchum**

The city of Ketchum is located in the Wood River Valley in south central Idaho. Founded in 1880 during the mining boom, Ketchum is now regarded as one of the most popular destinations for winter and summer visitors due to its world-class skiing, mountain biking, fishing, hiking, restaurants, art galleries and shopping. The city of Ketchum hosts the famous annual Wagon Days Parade, held on Labor Day weekend, and numerous other year-round attractions. Ketchum is home to more than 10,000 full- and part-time residents. For more information about the city of Ketchum, visit [www.ketchumidaho.org](http://www.ketchumidaho.org).

Contact:

Lisa Enourato  
(208) 720-9766, [lenourato@ketchumidaho.org](mailto:lenourato@ketchumidaho.org)

Jo Murray  
(208) 726-5869, [jo@jomurray.com](mailto:jo@jomurray.com)