

In support of local efforts to ban gas leaf blowers and improve the quality of life in Sonoma and drastically reduce unnecessary harmful particulate matter in the air we breathe, I wanted to contribute a few statements and my opinion from the vantage point of a working small animal Veterinarian in Sonoma.

It is very well known that particulate matter such as dust, dirt, and debris from the environment can pose a tremendous health challenge for dog, cats, and virtually all other mammals. While the normal changes in seasons, weather, rainfall, and pollen counts can all affect animals, extra particulate matter such as the debris aerosolized by leaf blowers pose a sharply increased risk for a variety of health problems for our domestic species. Among those most notably seen by me directly are:

1. Significant flare up of cough, wheezing, and "respiratory" issues that encompass both infectious and inflammatory types of diseases.
2. Eye problems of unknown origin--either in one or both eyes: owners report a clear discharge from the eyes or a "pink eye" situation with no previous known injury.
3. Nasal discomfort: rubbing and snorting, as if to remove a "foreign body" that is not there, but rather a minute irritant that was substantial enough to bother the mucous membranes and irritate the pet's nasal passages.
4. Skin issues, including itching and scratching. These clinical signs are usually blamed completely on atopy or "allergy." There is well documented, long standing scientific evidence that the irritation in the skin is secondary to allergens that the pet has inhaled.

In addition, because pets are so sound sensitive, the use of leaf blowers can startle animals and cause outdoor pets to dart away from yards and potentially scare them into more dangerous situations such as traffic or other precarious situations.

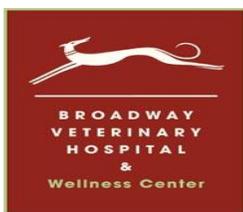
The blasting "on and off" sounds made with leaf blowers has a definite impact on small animals "fight or flight" response, causing an immediate release of cortisol into the bloodstream. Especially with cats, this taxes the body and leads to a surge in blood glucose almost instantly. In my opinion, this is a good example of the loud noise made by leaf blowers having a negative impact on animals all around our town---it is not an obvious impact, but once you realize what is going on inside their bodies on a cellular level, you realize that maybe the impact is farther reaching than we previously realized.

The information and examples I have stated above are only a small sample of the deleterious effects that leaf blowers have on the small animals of Sonoma. I hope that my words will help get some conversations started that emphasize the importance of considering the quality of life for our pets in Sonoma as people make an effort to decide the fate of leaf blowers in our community.

I would be happy to answer any other questions regarding this topic as my time and schedule permit.

Sincerely,

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