

Canine Water Safety

A Guide to Supplies, Warning Signs, and Location Choices

Many dogs enjoy day trips to water centered locations such as rivers, lakes, ponds, pools, etc. Taking pets swimming is fun for everyone in the family and is a great way to burn excess energy off quickly! However, it is very important to know the limits of your pet, and what they can handle. As well as keeping in mind general water safety rules and warning signs. This article will take you over some of Muddy Paws water supply must-haves, different warning signs to watch for in your pet as well as the surroundings, and how to choose safe locations for your pet to enjoy the water!

Water Safety Supplies:

There are some water safety or preparation supplies that absolutely every dog owner should keep with them when they visit bodies of water with their pets. There are also some supplies that will only be needed for certain dogs or locations, so it is very important to be aware of your dog's needs. Puppies, senior dogs, overweight dogs, or dogs with special physical needs, for example, will need more help than a strong and healthy 4 year old pet. First of all, let's go over the basics supplies that should always be included when you visit the water with your pet:

Basic Supplies (All Dogs):

- **Towel/Towels:** Keeping a towel on hand is important because the temperature could drop at any time, resulting in you needing to dry your pet quickly. In addition, there is always a scary possibility that a towel will be needed for something other than water because they injure themselves while playing. Plus, it is always nice to reduce the mess in your car! Any towel will do, but Muddy Paws especially loves these textured style towels or cheap beach towels that you can find almost anywhere!

[Messy Mutts Towel/Mat](#)

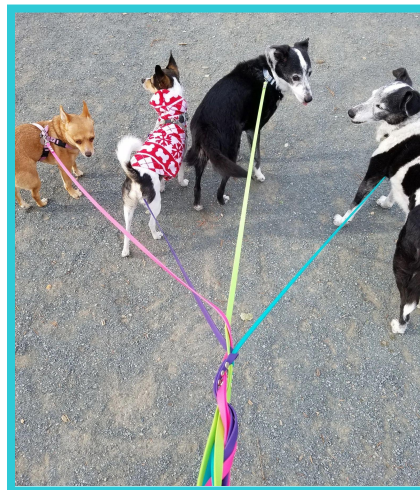
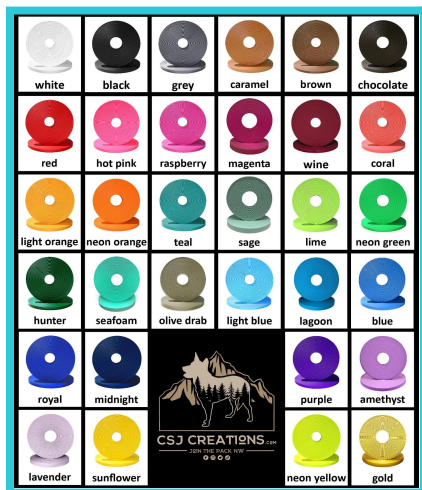


[Beach Towels](#)



- **A Leash:** A leash is a must have no matter where you are going with your dog. Leashes ensure that you are able to maintain control over any situation that may arise. Also, it can be truly dangerous for dogs to continue playing in water at times, and having a leash to force them to leave can be a game changer. These waterproof biothane leashes are a great choice if you are looking for a leash that dries quickly and is easy to keep clean!

Biothane Dog Leash

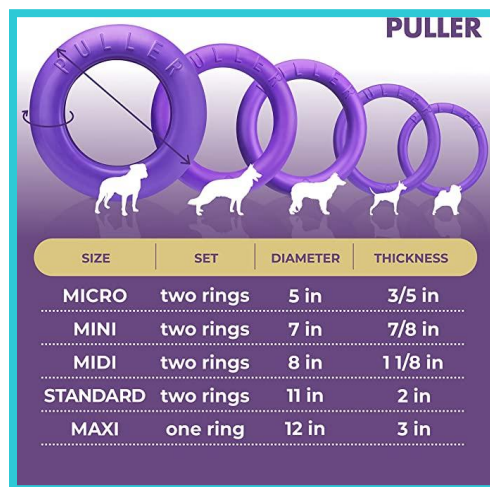


- **Floating Toy:** Bringing a floating toy is always a good move. Yes, a stick may do just as well, but the problem with sticks is that there is a much higher chance of injury. Sticks often have sharp parts that can lead to cuts in their mouth, and they also have the tendency to splinter and fall apart, which can lead to injury in the mouth or digestive tract. These are a couple of our favorite floating toys here at Muddy Paws!

Amphibious Bumper



Puller Dog Ring



Extra Assistance Dog Supplies (Elders, Puppies, Poor Swimmers, Etc.):

- **Life Jackets:** If you have any doubt whatsoever in your dogs swimming ability, it is always best to invest in a life jacket. We will go over some signs that your dog struggles with swimming later on in this guide. However, even if your dog is a strong swimmer, it may still be a good idea to invest in a life jacket if you visit turbulent water pretty often or you plan on doing activities like paddle boarding or boating with your pet. Outward Hound makes really high quality life jackets that include chin flotation assistance as well as sturdy rescue handles.

Outward Hound Life Jacket



- **Wetsuits:** Wetsuits can be really great for dogs who get cold easily. Many elderly or small dogs struggle to keep warm while playing in the water, especially in the frigid Pacific Northwest water. The Hurtta Swimmer Vest is a really great option for these dogs, and can be worn the whole time they are swimming, even if you have to layer it underneath their life vest. After swimming, there are a wide variety of jackets that are meant to help warm your dog back up as well. One of our favorites is the Hurtta Extreme Warmer Jacket.

Hurtta Swimmer Vest



Hurtta Extreme Warmer



Environment Warning Signs:

- **River Rapids:** Rivers should always be enjoyed with extreme caution. Make sure to be well aware of your dog's abilities, and always air on the safe side. In general, it is best to avoid throwing for your dog in areas of rapids or areas with a lot of obstacles in the immediate area or downstream. The most important thing to remember with rivers is that the water stops for no one, they are powerful and consistent, and should always be treated with respect and caution.

NOT SAFE



The photo on the Left shows water that is moving far too quickly, and it is also going to be very deep and difficult to see any boulders that may be beneath the surface. The one on the Right may not look that dangerous, but there are many branches and other snags along the opposite shore, as well as white rapids, showing a lot of strength.

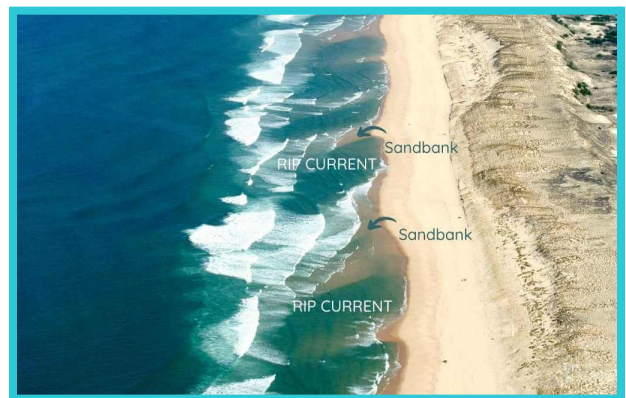
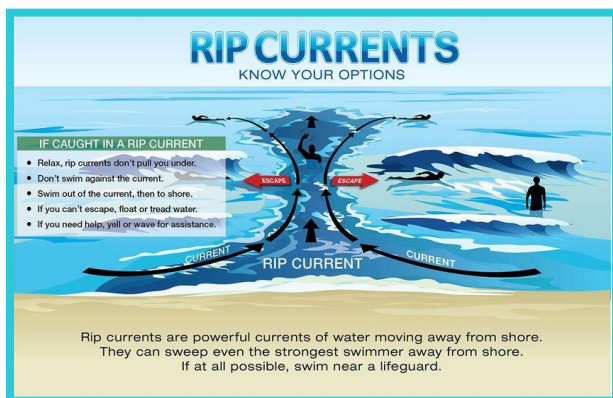
- **Popular Fishing Spots:** Avoiding popular fishing spots is a good idea as well. Unfortunately a lot of fishing supplies get left behind or lost by fishermen. This could be fishing line, hooks, lures, etc. All of which could cause injury to your pet. This is not completely avoidable, but it is something that should be considered.
- **Man Made Water Obstructions:** Being aware of nearby dams, irrigation tunnels, water culverts, water turbines, etc. is imperative. These are dangerous for everyone, not just our pets. It's a good rule of thumb to steer clear of all man made water obstructions, as they are often what leads to serious injury or death.



- **Algae Growth:** Areas with blue or green algae growth in excess should be avoided. This algae is toxic and can make your pet incredibly sick if they swallow water while playing, and it can also bother the skin or ears of your pet.



- **Riptides:** Riptides are pretty well known as being dangerous for humans, but they are just as dangerous for our pets. Keep a close eye on your pet if you are allowing them to swim in the ocean, and make sure you know how to spot riptides. Life jackets are a good option to consider no matter what, but especially at the ocean because riptides are incredibly powerful, and even the persistence of waves can be enough to tire your normally athletic dog out quicker than you would expect.



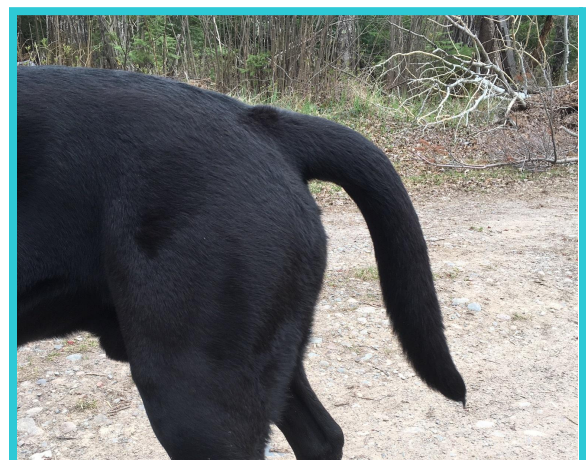
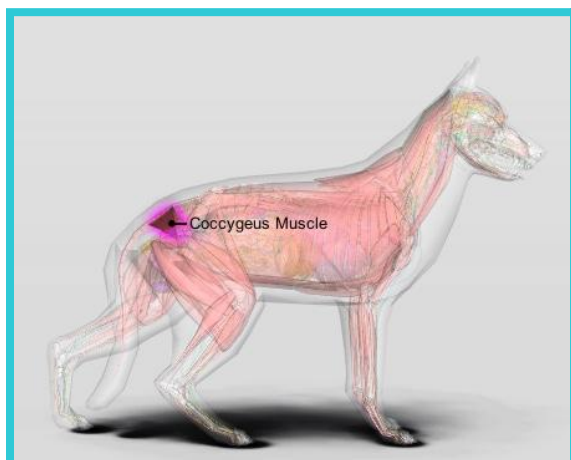
- **Non Ingestibles:** Dogs are often inclined to eat or drink some of the nastiest things they can find. Rotten fish or drowned rotting animal corpses are among some of the many things that smell great to our pups, but are obviously repulsive to us. Make sure not to allow your dog to eat or play with decomposing animals, as it can make them very sick. In addition, make sure to bring fresh water for your pup to drink if you are going to be playing in salt water, or even pond water a lot of the time. An excess of either of these water types can dehydrate or make your dog ill as well.

Warning Signs to Watch Your Pet For:

- **Struggling to Swim:** It can sometimes be difficult to determine whether your dog is struggling to swim or not. So here are some signs for you to watch for:
 - Fear or panic in and around water (wide eyes, yelping, avoiding going in, etc.)
 - Their butts sink much lower, and they are splashing a lot with their front paws
 - Swallowing a lot of water
 - Bobbing below the surface of the water
 - Paws are pushing out to the sides rather than below them

Most dogs are able to learn how to swim, but it's important to remember not to push them too far, and to be aware of their limits. Some people believe all dogs are innately good swimmers and that puppies can just be tossed into water immediately, but that is definitely not the case.

- **Puking Water:** Throwing up water is a tell-tale sign that it is time for your dog to take a break from playing. This means that they are swallowing too much water, whether they are still having a good time and want to go back in or not. It is always better to play it on the safe side and make sure they take a break.
- **Dead Tail (Limber Tail):** Dead tail is an inflammation in the muscles at the base of a dog's tail that can be brought on by over exertion, and playing in cold water. It presents as a limp tail that is unable to move as usual, and is often associated with pain near the base of your dog's tail. Generally dead tail resolves itself pretty quickly and without treatment, but it is best to avoid it if possible. Drying your dog quickly and not allowing them to play in cold water for too long is the best way to keep them from being affected by dead tail. If they do get a dead tail, it is best to rest them until the tail returns to normal. If they experience a lot of pain, you can talk to your vet about getting anti-inflammatory medication to help them out, as well as making sure that there are no other underlying issues.



- **Near Drowning (Submersion Syndrome):** Near drowning occurs when a dog inhales a small amount of water. Not enough to kill them immediately, but enough to cause breathing issues. These symptoms can take up to 24 hours to appear after the initial incident, and can result in fatality in extreme cases. Here is a list of symptoms to look out for if you think your dog may have submersion syndrome:
 - Labored or open-mouthed breathing
 - Irregular breathing
 - Posture changes
 - Weak pulse
 - Loss of consciousness
 - Hypothermia
 - Cyanosis (changes in the color of mucous membranes)

If your dog is exhibiting any of these behaviors and has been in a situation where they may have inhaled water in the past 24 hours, I would recommend getting them into the vet ASAP so that they can do a more thorough check of your pets health.

Location Recommendations:

Muddy Paws has taken the time to pull a few of our favorite places to take our pups to play in the water! All of these are in the Upper Kittitas County area, and are great options for your water loving pup.

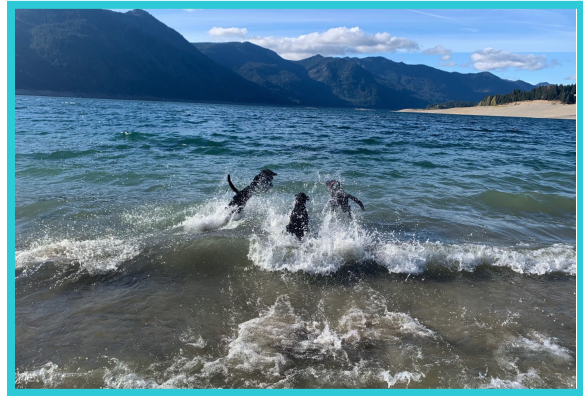
Hanson Ponds Park



Hanson Ponds is conveniently located right off of I-90 in Cle Elum and has very calm waters. This makes it a great choice for all dogs, including those who are just learning how to swim or may not be the strongest swimmers. It also tends to be a little warmer than other options because it is not direct runoff from the mountain snow melt like many of the options in Upper Kittitas County.

Google Maps Link: <https://goo.gl/maps/U97SKfoVTVDF535E8>

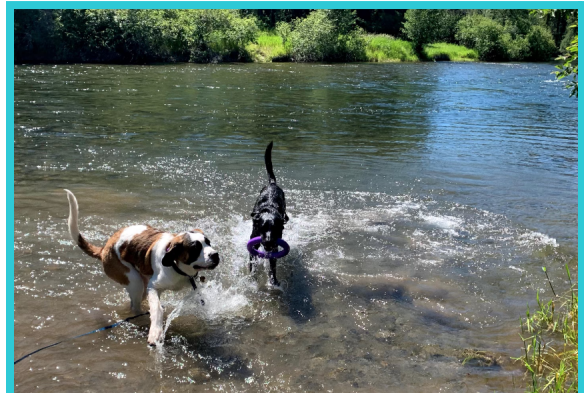
Speelyi Beach



Speelyi is a very popular location in our area, especially on the weekends, so we do recommend visiting mainly during the week if possible. However, if you have a pretty social dog with a strong recall, this is not as much of a concern. Having a four wheel drive vehicle is also really nice if you are visiting this location, because it allows you to drive along the beach and find more space for your family. This is a good choice for almost any dog to go swimming as well, but the waves can get pretty strong if the wind picks up, so keep that in mind.

Google Maps Link: <https://goo.gl/maps/mdVwmQUwKLmVExR79>

Yakima River at Bullfrog



For dogs who are proficient swimmers or just like to wade around a bit, there is a terrific river spot off of Bullfrog Road to take them. This spot is great because it has a nice little eddy that the water slows down in and that it gets deep enough for dogs to jump into and swim without touching the bottom. However, it is very important to be aware of how far your dog is going out and to always throw upstream, because there are rapids pretty close downstream.

Google Maps Link: <https://goo.gl/maps/z8eFxfj6szMbvLcy69>

Sources:

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