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Ocean hazards

July 28, 2011, By Cheryl Smyth, ARTICLE, HEALTH

On the coast of New Brunswick, my dog 'Tessi' and I struggled through the muck to reach the water. She needed to satisfy her thirst. Once there, she hesitated at the dingy expanse. A minute or so passed before I comprehended her resistance wasn't due to the water's dirtiness, but to its saltiness.

LAND LOVERS

Having always lived near the Great Lakes, this was my first journey to the ocean with a canine companion. I'd never thought about the undrinkable aspect of the water. I'm not alone, in 2010, approximately 43 per cent of the population lived in coastal provinces and territories. Ours is a big country where the majority lives far from the coast and may not consider its potential hazards.

Though Tessi showed no interest in the seawater, some dogs drink it anyway or accidentally ingest it while playing fetch. Julie Weste D.V.M., a Nova Scotia-based vet, states that too much intake is fatal. She adds that even dogs licking water off their fur can lead to vomiting.

WAVES

Beyond the issues of salt, assorted types of powerful waves occur on our coastlines. The beaches of Nova Scotia are subjected to an array of them. For example, a type called 'plunging' can thrust your dog to the ground and cause serious injury.

[More information on the variety of waves.](#)

RIP CURRENTS

Rip currents, or riptides, are powerful currents that pull away from shore. Anyone with an understanding of a rip current's characteristics will know to swim parallel to shore to escape its motion. An animal, like an uninformed person, is more apt to fight the strong current in an attempt to swim straight to land, resulting in serious trouble.

Where these currents exist, waves distort the water, which becomes sandy and discoloured, making them easy to see. Warnings are posted near areas prone to rip currents.

[More information on rip currents.](#)

JELLYFISH

Jellyfish are common in our northern oceans. Alive or dead, they inflict a nasty sting, although the wounds are mild compared to their southern counterparts. Dogs are less likely to be stung because of the protection of their fur. Noses, however, are vulnerable spots.

[More information on jellyfish.](#)

BE PREPARED

Always be mindful of posted warning signs and any indications the ocean offers. Keep your

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dog under your control, and on leash if needed. After play, rinse off any saltwater with fresh water. Always carry a travel bowl and fresh water during seaside stops.

Many people and their canine pals live near the ocean or visit it. They enjoy the shoreline without encountering problems. When you know which ocean hazards to watch out for, you can better enjoy your day at the beach with your dog.

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Cheryl Smyth has been photographer for 20 years and a writer for a few. The desire of having her dog with her on her travels has inspired her to discover and write about all that pet travel has to offer. Some of her travel stories and photography are posted on [her website](#).

Photo courtesy Cheryl Smyth

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