

Emergency First Aid for Heat stroke



If your dog is showing the first signs of heat exhaustion, rapid breathing, rapid heart rate, the first thing you must do is remove him from the confining area. Nine times out of ten, heat exhaustion occurs while the dog is confined, whether it is in a car, crate, or doghouse.

Take the dog to shade, and soak him with cool water. Do **NOT** use extremely cold or iced water. This will cause blood vessels to constrict and will stop the heat from escaping. You can apply ice packs to the areas underneath his front legs, and to the groin area for rapid blood cooling. Give your dog enough water to wet his mouth and throat, but do **NOT** allow your dog to drink copious amounts!

Take your dog's temperature, this is done anally to get the most accurate reading. Prepare your dog for transport to the nearest emergency animal clinic. Do **NOT** cover your dog, even with a cold towel. This will prevent the heat from escaping. Do **NOT** place him back in his crate, but keep him with you, with windows down and air conditioning on high, to allow evaporation which will aid in the cooling process. Yes, there is also a danger that dog can become too cold. Monitor the temperatures and stop the cooling process as soon as your dog's temperature reads normally again. **Continue on to the vet's, your dog is not saved yet!**

Heat Stroke Kills

When the temperatures rise as we get deeper and deeper into the summer months, it is extremely important to prevent your dog from overheating. Dogs cannot tell you when their temperature rises and it is our responsibility to ensure that our pets have sufficient shelter from the sun, adequate water to drink, and a way of cooling off when the summer sun rises.

Monitoring your dog closely in high heat is not enough however. It seems that pet owners tend to drop their guard when the temperatures level off, either in the Spring and Fall, and owners think the dangers are passed. Failure to realize that exercise and subsequent confinement, whether in a hot car, crate or doghouse is enough to send your dog's body temperature skyrocketing.

A dog's body temperature is normally between 101°F and 102°F. Dogs regulate their body temperature by panting, expelling heat out, causing an evaporatory reaction. If he can not expel the heat fast enough, his body temperature rises. A rise of 3 degrees to a temperature of 105°F is all it takes to send your dog into a dangerous situation. At this temperature, the dog can no longer cope with reducing his body heat and the oxygen demand goes up to where the dog can not keep up, and his temperature continues to rise.

When the temperature hits 108°F, the heart, brain, liver, kidneys, and intestinal tracts start to begin breaking down at a cellular level, and the damage can progress at an alarming rate. Even immediate treatment and effective cooling to bring his temperature down can leave the dog with internal damage that may affect his health in long term ways. Leaving your dog cooped in a hot car is a sure way to bring on heat stroke. A hot car is like an oven, with temperatures that can rise an astounding 34°F per minute! People have been known to break windows to retrieve dogs in danger from hot cars, if they don't do it themselves, the Humane Society most assuredly will.

Early Signs of Heat Stroke

Rapid breathing, dry mouth and nose, rapid heart rate, and gums that leave their healthy color for dull, grayish-pink, or red, are all early stages of heat stroke. **This IS an EMERGENCY!** Even at the earliest stage of heat stroke, you may be fighting for your dog's life. You must get him to a veterinarian as soon as possible. These symptoms can be followed in minutes by collapse, seizures, coma and death.

Prevent Heat stroke in Your Dog

A Cool Dog is Better

The temptation is great, and oh, those puppy dog eyes are just begging to go with you when you leave to go shopping, or on some other such errand. Even though it may seem to be the kindest thing to do for your dog, bringing him with you on your errands can turn from a joyous outing (to him) to a life and death situation. Kinder by far, to leave him at home, where he is not susceptible to roasting in a closed car. If you absolutely must bring him with you, bring water for him to drink, leave your car windows wide open, all of them, so a breeze can blow through your car. If you are worried about your dog disappearing, there are window grates that lock into place in an open window to prevent just such a vanishing act. Leave your car running, with the air conditioning on. Look into doggie daycare if you are planning on being gone a full day. Most vet clinics will happily board your dog for the day (as mine is) while you run errands. Prevention at Home Dogs don't know when to quit when they are having fun. It is up to us to watch for stress signals (heavy breathing, excessive panting) and put a halt to play when it gets to be too much. Be sure your dog has a cool place to lay down, a well ventilated area in the shade is needed. Water is essential to dogs, never more so during summer heat. Make sure your dog has lots of clean, cool water, within easy reach at all times. Prevention is really the only method of keeping your pet healthy during the summer.

Danjo Dobies, 2008



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