

Preventing Heatstroke in Dogs

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

Signs of **HEATSTROKE**



On a sunny day with temperatures at or above 70° Fahrenheit, most people know that the temperature inside their car can soar to intolerable levels for their dog. But even outdoors in a non-shaded area, the heat can quickly get to your pooch and cause serious complications.

Dogs do not perspire the way humans do; in fact, the only sweat glands that they have are on the pads of their feet. Dogs pant to cool themselves and also use a temperature exchange called convection to cool their skin. Both panting and convection cool the body by exchanging the warm body temperatures for the cooler air outside. If the surrounding air is not considerably cooler than the animals' body temperature - as in the case of a hot, stuffy automobile - the cooling

system will not work and heatstroke can occur. [View our "How to Keep Your Dog Cool in Hot Weather" Video.](#) 

What are the signs of heatstroke?

Signs of heatstroke include:

- Increased heart rate
- Excessive panting
- Increased salivation
- Bright red tongue
- Red or pale gums
- Thick, sticky saliva
- Depression
- Weakness
- Dizziness
- Vomiting (sometimes with blood)
- Diarrhea

As heatstroke progresses, it can cause seizures, coma, cardiac arrest, and death.

What should I do if my dog gets heatstroke?

Remove your dog from the hot area immediately. Prior to taking him to your veterinarian, lower his temperature by wetting him thoroughly with cool water (for very small dogs, use lukewarm water), then increase air movement around him with a fan. Be careful, however, as using very cold water can actually be counterproductive. CAUTION: Cooling too quickly and especially allowing his body temperature to become too low can cause other life-threatening medical conditions. The rectal temperature should be checked every 5 minutes. Once the body temperature is 103°F, the cooling measures should be stopped and your dog should be dried thoroughly and covered so he does not continue to lose heat. Even if your dog appears to be recovering, take him to your veterinarian as soon as possible,



he should still be examined since he may be dehydrated or have other complications.

Allow free access to water if your dog can drink on his own. Do not try to force-feed cold water; as he may inhale it and could choke.

How can heatstroke be prevented?

- Keep pets with predisposing conditions like heart disease, obesity, older age, or breathing problems cool and in the shade. Even normal activity for these pets can be harmful.
- Provide access to water at all times.
- Do not leave your pet in a hot parked car even if you're in the shade or will only be gone a short time. The temperature inside a parked car can quickly reach up to 140 degrees.
- Make sure outside dogs have access to shade.
- On a hot day, restrict exercise and don't take your dog jogging with you. Too much exercise when the weather is very hot can be dangerous.
- Do not muzzle your dog.
- Avoid places like the beach and especially concrete or asphalt areas where heat is reflected and there is no access to shade.
- Wetting down your dog with cool water or allowing him to swim can help maintain a normal body temperature.
- Move your dog to a cool area of the house. Air conditioning is one of the best ways to keep a dog cool, but is not always dependable. To provide a cooler environment, freeze water in soda bottles, or place ice and a small amount of water in several resealable food storage bags, then wrap them in a towel or tube sock. Place them on the floor for your pet to lay on.



You can prevent your pet from suffering heatstroke. Use common sense and think of what it might feel like to wear a fur jacket (that cannot be removed) on a hot summer day.

Recommended Product



[Handi-Drink Pet Water Bottles](#)



[Gel Pet Mats](#)



[Cool Bed III](#)