

## Can't stand the heat? NEITHER CAN YOUR PET

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**H**eat stroke can be a life-threatening condition for anyone, dogs included. Since dogs at play do not comprehend “overdoing it,” it is our job as responsible pet owners to supervise them while playing in the Texas heat.

Heat stroke occurs when the body is unable to keep its temperature in a safe range. Our pets can't sweat and can overheat easily. Normal canine body temperature ranges from 100.0–102.5°F. Dogs with moderate heat stroke and a temperature of 104–106°F can recover within an hour if given proper care. Severe heat stroke occurs at a body temperature greater than 106°F and can cause kidney, liver and heart problems. Brain damage can occur at temperatures above 106°F, so it is important to recognize a heat stroke quickly and seek immediate veterinary attention.

### **SIGNS OF HEAT STROKE:**

- ❖ Rapid breathing or panting
- ❖ Bright red tongue and gums
- ❖ Thick, sticky saliva
- ❖ Depression
- ❖ Weakness or Dizziness
- ❖ Vomiting or diarrhea
- ❖ Rapid heart rate; low blood pressure;
- ❖ Seizures or coma

### **DOG RISK FACTORS**

Dogs are at an increased risk for heat stroke if they are very young, very old, obese, not conditioned for exercise, not used to being outside for long periods of time, or if they have heart, respiratory or neurological diseases. Brachycephalic refers to dogs with “smooshed in faces.” Dogs with longer snouts and throats are able to pass air over their tongues via panting, a factor in cooling. It takes extra work to move the air in a “smooshed in face” dog, and airways become inflamed. This causes upper airway obstruction and leads to more respiratory distress and over heating. Under normal circumstances, these dogs can breathe with difficulty, so it is important to know what “normal” snorting and breathing noises are for your dog, allowing you to recognize a change. Dogs with prior heat strokes are at an increased risk for recurrence. Finally, dogs on certain medications are prime heat stroke candidates.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL RISK FACTORS:**

- ❖ High temperatures
- ❖ High relative humidity, even at lower temperatures
- ❖ Lack of shade and water
- ❖ Poor ventilation

### **TREATMENT**

Seeking veterinary attention quickly is critical, as heat stroke can be fatal. The main goal of treatment is to reduce the body temperature to a more appropriate level, but to avoid over cooling or cooling too quickly.

- ❖ Move into the shade or A/C with a fan on
- ❖ Take a rectal temperature, if possible
- ❖ DO NOT immerse in ice or cold water-this will drop the temperature too quickly
  - ❖ A reasonable goal of reducing the temperature to 102.5–103°F is ideal
- ❖ Place cool, water-soaked towels over body
- ❖ Don't force them to drink, but have fresh, cool water available should they choose to
- ❖ Transport your dog to the veterinary clinic
  - ❖ They will be given IV fluids to hydrate and stabilize them

### **PREVENTION**

The key to avoid heat stroke in your pet is prevention. There should be access to water at all times. Avoid intense exercise during the hottest part of the day and avoid places like asphalt or the beach where heat is reflected and there is no shade. Finally, pets should NEVER be locked in a parked car, even if you are in the shade and plan to be gone for a short time. -The temperature inside a parked car can quickly reach up to 140°F.