

Heatstroke/Hyperthermia and Heat Exhaustion

Canine Connections
www.k9-connections.com

Heatstroke or Hyperthermia

Heatstroke or Hyperthermia can be a common occurrence during the warmer months of the year. Dogs are prone to over-heating because they do not sweat like humans but instead pant. Excessive panting can cause dehydration. Other key factors would be obesity, advanced age, youth (puppy), and poor ventilation can lead a dog into hyperthermia (heatstroke). Owners of breeds with short noses such as Boxers, Bulldogs, Pekinese, etc. should be especially cautious.

Heatstroke is associated with elevation in body temperature. Dogs who have been afflicted with heatstroke are unable to regulate their body temperature. Cell damage usually begins to occur at body temperatures over 106 degrees (Fahrenheit).

If untreated severe heatstroke results in kidney, liver, and/or heart failure. Dogs that are treated after a significant delay may survive but could be left with permanent effects such as blood clotting disorders, metabolic abnormalities, muscle damage, and/or brain dysfunction.

Symptoms of Heatstroke or Hyperthermia (Some or all may be present):

- Panting
- Weakness or collapse
- Elevated temperature (from 105-110 degrees - normal is 101-102 degrees) . Vomiting, diarrhea and / or lack of urine production
- Seizures
- Fast pounding pulse
- Blank or starring expression

Heat Exhaustion

Heat Exhaustion can occur during or after exercise, particularly on hot or humid days. Heat exhaustion may not be associated with an elevation in body temperature.

Symptoms of Heat Exhaustion:

- Collapse or fainting
- Mentally dazed
- Vomiting
- Muscle cramps (seizure-like tremors)
- Abnormally rapid heartbeat and rapid breathing
- Muscle weakness

Heatstroke or Heat Exhaustion Prevention

- Provide adequate shade and ventilation for outside dogs. Shelter them from the sun, if enclosed, provide adequate ventilation.
- Provide free access to water on warm days (ideally water should not be kept out of direct sunlight).
- If your home is not air-conditioned, open windows for ventilation. If you close all of your windows for security (or your pet's safety) make sure the room is well ventilated and drapes are closed against the sunlight. If you keep your pet in a crate, make sure the crate has adequate airflow (wire crates are better than airline kennels in this situation).
- Do not have your dog accompanying you on errands in warm months. . If you have to leave your dog in a car, park in the shade and keep windows open for ventilation (safety could be an issue here as well; will your dog jump out or could someone bother your dog in the parked car?). If you park in the shade check on your dog frequently as the sun can move and so will the shade. If your errand is longer than a minute or two the temperature in your car can soar rapidly.

Heatstroke First Aid Materials

- 2-liter soda bottle
- Towel or blanket
- Thermometer and lubricating jelly

Heatstroke First Aid

- Take the dog's temperature. Is the dog's temperature 106 degrees (F) or greater, is he/she experiencing shortness of breath, and extremely hot to the touch?
- Contact your veterinarian or animal emergency care facility immediately for advice on how to avoid shock and other complications. Advise them on the symptoms and seek their advice for further instructions.
- If unable to reach your veterinarian use the following as guidelines but not as a replacement for veterinary advice.
- Immerse the dog in cool to cold water. The bathtub is ideal.
- Monitor temperature, taking every 2 minutes and note any changes. Remove the dog from cool bath once his/her temperature reaches 104 degrees; do not wait until the dog's temperature is normal. The temperature may continue to drop to an unsafe level. Speak to your pet in a normal, soothing tone. If you panic or are overly excited, this may frighten your pet.
- If temperature falls below 100 degrees, keep your pet warm by covering with the towel/blanket. Place a 2-liter soda bottle filled with warm (not hot) water against the dog.
- Attempt to contact your veterinarian or animal emergency care facility again.

Transportation to the Veterinarian

- If at all possible two people should assist with transporting the dog to the veterinarian; one to drive and one to provide care for your pet.
- The vehicle must be well ventilated during the trip.
- Use a pet carrier if possible, especially if only one person is transporting the dog. A dog that normally responds well to car rides may not act the same under emergency conditions.
- Secure the carrier if possible.

Please note that your veterinarian is the best person to ask any health related questions.