



Heat Stroke

Heat stroke (hyperthermia) in animals is a serious condition, which can be fatal if not recognised and treated quickly!

- It takes 15 minutes for dogs to die of heat stroke
- 50% average survival rate
- An increase in 2 degrees celsius is all it takes for heat stroke to set in
- There are 2 types of heat stroke - exertional and no exertional

Instead of sweating, dogs eliminate body heat by panting. They do have some sweat glands in their footpads which help with heat dissipation, but only minimally. When panting isn't enough, a dog's body temperature will rise. This can be fatal if not corrected quickly.

In the worst cases the animals' temperature will reach a point that causes internal, sometimes irreversible, cell damage to the brain. This can sadly result in the animal dying or leading to euthanasia because of severe organ damage.

Signs of heat stroke:

- Panting and/or increased breathing rate
- Bright red or dark gums and tongue
- Sticky gums and tongue
- Increased heart rate
- Vomiting and diarrhoea
- Weakness/staggering - if attempting to walk
- Lethargic
- Seizures (fitting) and unconsciousness
- Excessive drooling
- Glassy eyes
- Fearful expression

What can you do:

Recently advice has changed slightly - We now recommend to “**cool first, transport second**” as the immediate first aid response for dogs with heatstroke.

- Remove the animal from the problem source. This may be a car, conservatory, open environment with direct sun. Get them into a **shaded, cooler area** (if possible)
- Pour **COOL** water all over the animal. (It is important the water is **not ice water**, as this constricts blood vessels and **will slow down the cooling process**). Immersion in cool water is fine for young health dogs.
- Offer the animal water, (they may not drink as they can be very weak, or may even be unconscious)
- Direct a cold air fan at the animal
- Pour/wipe an alcoholic spirit over the animals’ foot pads and ears - This draws away the heat from these areas to help cool them faster
- We do not advise placing a wet towel over the animal, as this prevents evaporation of heat
- **Inform your vets and get your animal to them as soon as possible for further treatment!!**

What next?

On arrival at the veterinary surgery, your animal will be taken through to the hospital, where the vets and nurses will continue to try and reduce their temperature. This is done by spraying cooled water and fans over the animal. The pet will be placed on intravenous fluids to help cool their temperature further, as well as replace any fluids they may have lost through panting, vomiting or diarrhoea. Occasionally a cool water enema may be performed.

In addition to this we will be monitoring the pet’s temperature carefully to establish how high their temperature is and how severe their cells and brain may be damaged.

In some cases of heat stroke, your pet may have suffered severe damage to cells and therefore, be brain damaged. With cases like this, the kindest option may be euthanasia.

Animals that have had the condition recognised and treated quickly and efficiently can go on to make a good recovery.

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Most at risk:

- Brachycephalic animals (Dogs with flat faces and noses, e.g. Pug/Bulldog type breeds)
- Thick coated animals
- Overweight animals
- Animals with heart and lung problems or diseases
- Older dogs
- Giant breeds - Bernese Mountain Dog, St Bernard etc.
- Working dogs

Please remember animals are unable to cool themselves off as quickly and effectively as humans can because of their limited ability to sweat, therefore think ahead as to what type of environment your animals are in on hot days. Even if they are in the shade outdoors on a hot day the environmental temperature is still high.

Prevention:

- Cooling mats, jackets or bandana
- Ice cubes in water
- Walks early in the morning or late in the evening
- Steady pace
- Paddling pool
- Regular grooming
- Shady areas with water in
- Check temperature of roads and pavements - simply touch the pavement with the back of your hand for seven seconds. If you cannot hold out for the full seven seconds because the surface is too hot, then it's also too hot for your dog's paws
- NEVER leave in the car even for very short periods. If you were to leave your dog in a vehicle and the dog became ill or worse resulted in a fatality, you could well see yourself charged with the offence of animal cruelty under the **Animal Welfare Act 2006**. If convicted of this offence, then you could face up to 6 months in custody and/or a fine of up to £20,000

If you have any further questions on heat stroke, please don't hesitate to call and speak to one of our vets or vet nurses.