

Cooling Down your Dog & Heat Stroke

The summer months can be brutal to your dog. Dogs are much more susceptible to heatstroke than humans. One reason for this is, your dog wears his fur coat all year round. And while dogs do have sweat glands on their feet, they do not have them on the rest of their body. They rely on panting, a method of breathing out excess heat, to cool down their bodies. This method is not as affective as sweating.

Some breeds are much more susceptible to the heat then others. Dogs with thick, double-coats have a harder time beating the heat.

The major cause of heatstroke in dogs is leaving a dog in a parked car. Even with the windows cracked on a 70° F (22° C) to 80° F (26° C) day, while it may feel comfortable outside, the inside of your car can heat up to over 100° F (38° C) in minutes! As you can imagine, with that fur coat on, your dog's body temperature rises very quickly.

Exercising in hot weather is another common way heatstroke can occur. As with humans, older dogs, over-weight dogs and or dogs with heart or lung ailments, are much more likely to suffer from heatstroke than younger dogs that are more in shape. Do not push your dog to exercise on very hot or humid days.

If you suspect your dog has heatstroke, cool him down as quickly as you can and call your vet immediately. Some of the symptoms of heatstroke are; rapid heavy panting, drooling, gasping for air, glassy eyes, weakness, and sometimes deep-red gums and the inability to stand. In some extreme cases seizures, diarrhea and vomiting can occur. Cooling your dog's body temperature down quickly is very important. The fastest way to do this is by using cool water. Do not use ice water, as a dramatic change in temperature can be dangerous. You can put your dog in a bathtub, sink or kiddie pool filled with cool water. Another way is to put cool wet towels around your dog's body. Be sure to refresh the towels in cool water every few minutes, as the towels will quickly reach the same temperature as your dog's body.