

## Introduction

Imagine not being able to shed your winter clothes on a hot summer day, and your only means of cooling off was by panting. Dogs do not sweat through their skin like humans - they release heat primarily by panting and they sweat through the foot pads and nose. Panting isn't the easiest way to cool off, and it is much more difficult in humid weather, as there is very little evaporation.

If a dog cannot effectively expel heat, the internal body temperature begins to rise. Once the dog's temperature reaches 41.50 damage to the body's organs may become irreversible.

Unfortunately, too many dogs succumb to heat stroke when it could have been avoided. Learn how to recognize the signs of heat stroke and prevent it from happening to your dog.

## Signs of heat stroke

The following signs may indicate heat stroke in a dog:

- Increased rectal temperature (over 40° requires action, over 41.5° is a dire emergency)
- Vigorous panting
- Dark red gums
- Dry mucus membranes (specifically the gums)
- Bloody vomiting or diarrhoea
- Lying down and unwilling (or unable) to get up
- Staggering
- Collapse and/or loss of consciousness
- Thick saliva
- Dizziness or disorientation
- Seizures



## What to do if you suspect heat stroke

If you have even the slightest suspicion that your dog is suffering from heat stroke, you must take immediate action.

This is an **EMERGENCY** situation and can be life-threatening to your pet!

- First, move your dog out of the heat and away from the sun right away.
- Begin cooling your dog by hosing in the shower or with tap water. You can also place cool, wet rags or washcloths on the body - especially the foot pads and around the head.
- DO NOT use ice or very cold water! Extreme cold can cause the blood vessels to constrict, preventing the body's core from cooling and actually causing the internal temperature to further rise. In addition, over-

cooling can cause hypothermia, introducing a host of new problems. When the body temperature reaches 39.5°, stop cooling.

- Offer your dog cool water to drink, but do not force water into your dog's mouth.
- Call or visit your vet right away - even if your dog seems better. Internal damage to the bowels, brain, liver and kidneys might not be obvious to the naked eye, so an exam is necessary (and blood testing may be recommended).

*Tip: recruit others to help you - ask someone to call the vet while others help you cool your dog.*

## Preventing heat stroke

There are ways you can prevent heat stroke from happening in the first place.

- NEVER leave your dog alone in the car on a warm day, regardless of whether the windows are open. Even if the weather outside is not extremely hot, the inside of the car acts like an oven - temperatures can rise to dangerously high levels in a matter of minutes.
- Avoid vigorous exercise on warm days.
- When outside, opt for shady areas, or head to the beach for a swim.
- Keep fresh cool water available at all times.
- Certain types of dogs are more sensitive to heat - especially elderly dogs, overweight dogs and brachycephalic (short-nosed) breeds, like Pugs, Bulldogs, Cavalier King Charles Spaniels, Boxers and even Staffies. Take extreme precautions with these breeds during summer.

Some dogs can recover fully from heat stroke if it is caught early enough. Others suffer permanent organ damage and require lifelong treatment. Sadly, many dogs do not survive heat stroke.

**Prevention is the key to keeping your dog safe during warmer weather.**

