

Summer Blog 2012: Staying Cool with Your Pet:

Heat Stroke and Overheating- Information for Pet Owners



As we enter the warmer weather (finally!), dogs are at risk of overheating or developing heat stroke. Pets that are at increased risk include overweight dogs, older dogs, dogs with heart conditions, or brachycephalic dogs (breeds with short noses such as Pugs, Bulldogs and Staffy's). Cats are also at risk particularly if they have short noses also, for example long-haired Persian cats (although cats are a little better at keeping cool themselves!).

WHAT CAN I DO TO PREVENT THIS?

- Walk your dogs for a shorter period, either early morning or later at night during summer.
- Carry a plastic spray bottle with you to cool your pet down, and ensure they have a drink along the way. Dogs don't sweat! They cool by evaporation from their coat, and also by panting.
- On a walk, take time to stop in the shade, and head for home if they appear to be panting heavily or don't want to walk (smaller dogs can be carried).
- Ensure your pet is not overweight leading in to summer- your local vet can advise you of your pet's ideal weight, and how to activate a weight-loss plan if needed
- Ensure at least 2 water bowls for the day, in case one gets knocked over.
- NEVER leave your pet alone in a car; inside temperatures can reach 50 degrees within minutes, and dogs or cats can die suddenly. Cars can heat up very quickly even with the windows open.

WHAT DO I LOOK OUT FOR?

If your dog slows down on a walk, is reluctant to move, panting excessively, or has bright red or slightly blue-tinged gums or tongue, they may be overheating or developing heat stress. More severe signs can quickly result, including collapse, disorientation or seizure.

WHAT CAN I DO?



If you are worried your pet has over-heated, cool down your pet with a spray bottle or garden hose (DO NOT use ice packs as they can damage the skin), put a fan on your pet if you can, and offer water. Take a rectal temperature at home if you have a thermometer and can do this safely. If your pet's temperature is above 39.5, cool as above, and immediately contact your local vet (or emergency centre, if they are closed)

WHAT CAN MY VET DO?

Emergency treatment for heat stroke may include putting your dog on an IV drip, and active cooling (fans, wetting the coat, wetting the pads and ears) to promote evaporation and convective heat loss. If severe, blood tests and 24-hour monitoring may be required, as severe heat stroke can lead to organ failure.

