

HEATSTROKE & YOUR PET

Summer has arrived and you are ready to partake in all of the fun outdoor activities available for people and pets during the warm months. But before you grab your Frisbee and head outside, make sure you're aware of heatstroke—knowing how to prevent, detect, and treat heatstroke could mean the difference between life and death for your furry companion one day.



Prevention

People often associate heatstroke with high temperatures, but it also occurs when **humidity levels are high**, despite the temperature. Heatstroke is also possible in hot, humid, and unventilated areas indoors. To avoid heatstroke:

- Never leave your pet alone in a parked vehicle. A parked car can become an inferno in minutes, even with the windows open, and your pet could quickly succumb to heatstroke inside.
- Take your daily walk or run with your dog in the early morning or evening, when temperatures are less extreme. Touch the sidewalk with the palm of your hand—if it feels too hot for you, it's also too hot for the pads of your pet's paws.
- Even if your pet loves the outdoors and spends the majority of his time basking in the nature of your backyard, it's best to provide him with an air-conditioned retreat if possible.
- While outside, be sure your pet has access to shade and shelter away from direct sunlight.
- Fresh water should always be available for your pet, and be sure to use a sturdy bowl, especially if you'll be away from home for a while. A water bowl that has tipped over is of no use to your thirsty pet.

Signs of Overheating:

- Excessive panting and drooling
- Difficulty breathing
- Increased heart rate
- Mild weakness
- Stupor or actually collapsing
- Seizures
- Bloody diarrhea
- Vomiting

SunShine Animal Hospital Client Education Series

Short-nosed animals (e.g., Persian cats, pugs, boxers, and bulldogs) are more susceptible to heatstroke than their longer-nosed counterparts. Because of the shape of their faces, they are less effective at panting. Pets that are overweight, elderly, or have heart or lung diseases should be kept in air-conditioned rooms or in front of fans as much as possible.

Treatment

As soon as you see signs of heatstroke in your pet it is imperative that you begin a cooling method. Soak towels in cool water and wrap your pet in them. Never use cold water, because if the cooling happens too rapidly it can actually slow the cooling process. You can also place your pet in front of a fan to help reduce the body temperature or use cotton balls saturated with rubbing alcohol on the pads of her paws and her abdomen (be sure to not allow them to drink the rubbing alcohol).

After you've begun to cool your pet down, call us or the nearest animal emergency center for further instruction. In some cases, pets affected by heatstroke require intravenous fluids, blood pressure support, or other medications depending on the severity of their condition.