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Dog Heat Stroke

"Dog heat stroke requires immediate veterinary care. Panting does not cool dogs well when the outside temperature and body temperature are close (103F). Cool your dog on the way to the veterinarian by running the air conditioning and applying ice packs if you have them. The result of not seeking treatment could be kidney failure or brain damage."

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Symptoms of Dog Heat Stroke

Symptoms of heat stroke in dog include:

- Excessive panting
- Salivation
- Body temperature of 104° or more
- Collapse
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Increased, thumping heart rate
- Depression
- Stupor or appearing in a daze
- Seizures
- Coma

Heatstroke is usually seen in the months between May and July.

Treatment of Dog Heat Stroke

There are several steps that need to be immediately taken:

1. Move your dog to a cool place such as an air conditioned room.
2. Take rectal temperature every 10 minutes to see if it is coming down.
3. If rectal temperature if 104F -110F (40C - 43C) cool your dog with cool water from something like a garden hose or bucket, a cool water bath, ice packs applied to the abdomen or groin area or place in front of a fan.

Seek veterinary care immediately for canine heat stroke. Heat stroke can be particularly dangerous if you cannot cool your dog's temperature within 20 minutes

4. Wipe paws with cool water (paws are the only area on a dog that can sweat).
5. Once temperature reaches 103F or less than stop cooling to avoid hypothermia.

A reader recently sent a note recommending a Dog Cooling Jacket. These come in different sizes and rely on either water or gel which is cooled prior to putting them on your dog.

Side Effects of Heat Stroke in Dogs

Heat stroke in dogs can result in a breathing problem called laryngeal edema and hyperthermia (high body temperature). Hyperthermia can result in problems such as kidney disease, bleeding, heart arrhythmia and seizures.

These side effects can set in on the same day or within weeks of heat stroke. Be sure to consult with your veterinarian.

In most dogs if they can survive for 72 hours from the onset of the condition, then they should be fine.

Prevention of Canine Heat Stroke

As mentioned, dogs cannot cool themselves on hot days since panting becomes less effective the hotter it gets. This is why it is important not to leave your dog in the car in the summer, even with the window cracked open. A good guideline is to cool your dog or give your dog water when you feel the need for yourself.

The key to heatstroke is to recognize it as early as possible and to immediately begin bringing your dog's body temperature down to 103F.

Sources

Diagnosing and Managing Medical Issues Affecting Working Dogs
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College of Veterinary Medicine
Auburn University

Too Hot Under the Collar?
Putting Out the Fire of Heatstroke
Erika Pratt, DVM, DACVECC
Pfizer Animal Health

Can You Help other Dog Owners or Have a Dog Health Question?

Share your story or ask a question. Our editors or readers will provide an answer.

We will do our best to get back to you quickly (depends on how many questions we receive each day). If you do require an immediate response we suggest using this online dog veterinary service that is available now.

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