Outdoor Play – Summer Safety

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| Approved By: | Cady Flores | Effective Date: | 7/12/2022 |
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Purpose

Outline warning signs of heat exhaustion for our pet guests, how to proactively avoid heat stroke, and how to react if signs or symptoms of heat exhaustion are noticed.

Audience

General Managers, Assistant Managers, Supervisors, Animal Care Technicians

General Information

* Heat Stroke, also called sun stroke or heat exhaustion, occurs when there is an imbalance between heat production and heat loss within the body.
* A healthy temperature range for a dog or cat is 99 to 102.5 degrees Fahrenheit. When body temperature rises above 102.5 degrees, the pet is at risk for heat stroke.
* Periods of physical exertion without enough time to recover and/or strenuous exercise in hot weather, especially if there is high humidity, may lead to heat stroke in dogs.
* Cats are less prone to heat stroke, but their signs and treatment would be similar to dogs.

Procedure

The below procedure will cover the following how to proactively avoid heat exhaustion.

1. Learn the early warning signs of heat exhaustion (see below Warning Signs of Heat Exhaustion section).
2. Know what the high temperature for the day is and adjust daycare structure if needed.
3. Find cool ground and avoid hot asphalt for outdoor play.
   1. 80-90 degrees: Check cement / concrete to ensure the surface doesn’t burn paws (turf handles temperature better).
   2. Check paws frequently for redness, sensitivity, signs of burning or pain.
4. Always provide fresh water and replace every 15-30 minutes. Keep water out of direct sunlight.
5. Minimalize sun exposure.
6. Utilize doggie pools, sprinklers, water hoses, shade, fans etc.
   1. Note: Avoid placing fans on the ground.
7. Enforce rest breaks for high energy dogs – bring into a cool room, offer water, minimum 10–15-minute breaks.
8. Safety checks – watching for any signs of distress, difficulty breathing, and pain.
   1. Note: Brachycephalic dogs heat up faster and have difficulty cooling down so take extra precautions (Affenpinscher, Boston Terrier, Boxer, Brussels Griffon, Bulldog, Cane Corso, Chihuahua, French Bulldog, Japanese Chin, King Charles (& Cavalier), Lhasa Apso, Mastiff-types, Pekingese, Pug, Shih Tzu, Tibetan)
9. When outdoor play, take it slow and if needed cut outdoor play times short due to heat.
10. Pay close attention to the dogs. If the pet shows signs of heat exhaustion, you should attempt the following:
    1. Remove pet from direct heat.
    2. Place in cool room.
    3. Provide fresh, room temperature water.
    4. Monitor every 3-5 minutes for improvements by checking vital signs to better communicate to a veterinarian if assistance is needed. Reference Canine Vital Signs below.
    5. If there are no improvements or additional warning signs arise, seek immediate veterinarian assistance.
11. Employee should never attempt the following:
    1. NEVER use ice water or soak the pet’s entire body directly with cool water. This is a shock risk for their system. Ice water will cause the pet’s veins to contract and shrink. Dogs and cats do not sweat like humans, rather they sweat through their pads.

Warning Signs of Heat Exhaustion

* Excessive panting and becomes weak and lethargic.
* Dehydration and gums will turn bright red or a light pink/white color.
* Rapid heart rate.
* Foaming at the mouth.
* Acting drunk (in a stupor).
* Possible loss of consciousness.

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References

* N/A