



APONC HEALTH NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 2024 ISSUE

In this Issue

The Health Committee's August issue focuses on "Summer Safety".

We have 3 topics pertaining to safety with your dog in the summer:

- *Heat Stroke*
- *Keeping your dog cool without A/C*
- *Barbeque Safety*

We hope you enjoy reading these articles and learn some important techniques related to hot weather.

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HEATSTROKE IN DOGS: SIGNS, SYMPTOMS, TREATMENTS

DOGS ARE NOTORIOUSLY BAD AT DISSIPATING BODY HEAT. WATCH FOR EARLY SIGNS OF HEATSTROKE (ALSO KNOWN AS HYPERTHERMIA) IN YOUR DOG TO AVOID SERIOUS OUTCOMES.

What Is Heatstroke?

When a dog's internal body temperature goes above a normal temperature of 101.5 degrees Fahrenheit (F), this is a fever and is called hyperthermia. When the body temperature is above 105 degrees F, the dog may be suffering from heatstroke.

Dogs have only a couple of ways to cool off—blood vessel expansion and panting. When dogs pant, they evaporate moisture from their tongues, nasal passages, and the lining of their lungs, and this cools them down as air passes over the moist tissue. They also cool off via vasodilation. Blood vessels, especially in the ears and face, expand, bringing overheated blood closer to the surface to cool down.

The bottom surfaces of paws can sweat, but not enough to make a difference. "Heatstroke usually occurs when high ambient temperature overcomes the dog's ability to dissipate heat. The degree of damage is determined by how high a body temperature is reached and how long the animal is exposed," says Dr. Jerry Klein, Chief Veterinary Officer for the AKC.

Signs to Watch Out For

Heatstroke in dogs is life-threatening and can also result in very serious complications. Recognizing early signs of heatstroke may help you remedy the condition before things get too serious.

Early signs of heatstroke include heavy panting and rapid breathing, excessive drooling, dry mucous membranes, bright red gums and tongue, skin that's hot to the touch, and a higher heart rate. Affected dogs become hyperactive and may have difficulty maintaining balance.

As exposure to excessive heat goes on, the dog's condition worsens and includes signs of shock, pale mucous membranes with white or blue gums, a very rapid heart rate, and a drop in blood pressure. The dog hyperventilates, and dehydration becomes more severe. Pupils dilate, the pulse becomes more irregular, and the dog has muscle tremors. They may become lethargic and unwilling to move, urinate or defecate uncontrollably, collapse, and become comatose.

Why Does Heatstroke Occur?

Heatstroke generally occurs during the hottest part of the year, especially when it's humid.

Contributing factors include:

- **Breed:** Heatstroke can be seen in all breeds, but may be more likely in certain breeds, including longhaired and brachycephalic (short-nosed) dogs.
- **Age:** Very young dogs, as well as older dogs, are more susceptible.
- **Physical fitness:** Dogs that are out of shape are vulnerable when they exert a great deal of energy in excessively hot surroundings.
- **Weight:** Overweight and obese dogs are more likely to suffer from heatstroke.
- **Medical disorders:** Hypothyroidism, cardiac disease, and laryngeal paralysis also contribute to heatstroke.
- **Environment:** The most common cause of heatstroke in dogs is confinement in a closed vehicle. The ambient temperature inside a closed car can become dangerously high in a matter of minutes, and the results can be fatal. Other causes of heatstroke can include being confined in an exercise pen or crate without fresh water in direct sunlight or for an extended period of time.
- **Water:** Restricted access to water or not drinking enough water can cause overheating.
- **Acclimation:** Sudden change to a warmer climate can cause heat stress.

How to Treat Heatstroke

Heatstroke therapy involves immediately trying to lower the dog's body temperature. If you notice signs of heatstroke in your dog, it's critical to stop any activity and help your dog cool down by:

- Walking or carrying the dog to a well-ventilated, cool area.
- Spraying or sponging the dog with cool (not cold) or tepid water, especially on the underside. Don't immerse the animal in cold water.

- Using a fan to blow cool air on them.

If you have a rectal thermometer, you should take your dog's temperature. According to Dr. John Hamil, DVM, if the temperature is less than 105 degrees F, you should still consider this an emergency and immediately take your dog to your veterinarian. If the temperature is higher than 105 degrees F, try to cool the dog down, and after a few minutes, retake the temperature. Don't reduce the temperature below 103 degrees F, because the temperature may descend to critical levels.

Bring your dog to your veterinarian as soon as the temperature reaches 103 degrees F or if you're unable to reduce the temperature significantly. Severely affected dogs require fluids, medication, support, and oxygen. Complications may not occur immediately, so it's important to let your veterinarian determine the type of follow-up treatment required.

Prevention Is the Best Medicine

Immediate action and correct treatment can mean the difference between a swift and complete recovery and long-term complications. Some veterinarians also advise that once a dog has experienced heatstroke, it's more likely to reoccur.

Our dogs live to please us, and if we ask them to jog or hike or play catch, they'll do it with enthusiasm, even on the hottest days. So, it's up to you to keep the weather in mind and limit the time your dog exercises in the heat. Choose cooler times of day for play or training sessions.

Always provide plenty of cool fresh water, shade, and frequent rest periods when it's hot. And never leave your dog in the car. They may miss you, but they'll be better off waiting for you at home.

How to Keep Your Dog Cool in Extreme Heat Without Air Conditioning

The summer heat can be stifling for both dogs and humans. And when we lose power, it is not only stressful on our own bodies but on our dogs' as well. There are a few steps you can take to keep your dog (and you!) safe and cool in extreme heat.

Most Dogs Aren't Built for Heat

Most breeds are built to conserve rather than dissipate heat. They don't have sweat glands, and most of their body is wrapped in fur with little or no exposed skin. As a result, they lose heat through the pads of their feet and through their mouths by panting.

While sunscreen is important for all dogs, some breeds need special consideration when it comes to the sun. For example, white or fine-coated breeds, like Bull Terriers and Greyhounds, are especially

vulnerable to sunburn, while the black coats of dogs like the Schipperke absorb heat, adding to the danger of overheating and heatstroke.

Keep Water Available

Let your dog drink as much water as possible

If you have a working freezer, make cold treats, like frozen chew toys or dog-safe ice pops

How to Help a Dog Cool Down

Along with plenty of cool water, the most important thing to do to keep a dog cool is to stay indoors or in the shade. If your air conditioning turns off on an extra-hot day (and you can't get it back on), go to the coolest area of the house you can, such as the basement. If possible, stay at a friend's house until your air conditioning is restored. There are other ways you can relieve your dog from the heat by having dog cooling supplies on hand in advance, such as:

- Battery-operated fan
- Cool cloths made of chamois, like those used to dry cars at a car wash. If this happens at a dog show, put a moist chamois on your dog's back without getting them too wet, take it off, and present them to the judge, who probably will only feel a tiny bit of dampness when going over the dog. If you keep your cool cloth in a cooler, don't put it directly into the ice. You don't want to put anything ice-cold onto a dog, because that shrinks the blood vessels and actually generates more internal heat.
- Cooling vest, which deflects the heat and cools the dog through evaporation
- Cooling crate pad or a cold, wet towel that you can spread out for your dog to lie on. You can also have them stand on a damp towel to help their paw pads release heat.
- Rubbing alcohol, which you can dab behind your dog's ears, on their stomach, or on their paws. Rubbing alcohol cools faster than water and can draw out heat.
- Spray bottle filled with cool water. Spray the underside of their body that's not exposed to the hot sun (such as the groin area, where the hair is less dense), the bottoms of their feet, and inside their mouth.
- Rectal thermometer with lubricant. Your dog's temperature shouldn't rise above 102.5 degrees Fahrenheit, which is the high end of normal.
- Unflavored pediatric electrolyte solution for the dog to drink if they get dehydrated

Signs of Heatstroke

In spite of your best efforts, your dog could develop heatstroke. Here are the symptoms:

- Unusual breathing (rapid and loud)
- High rectal temperature (103 degrees Fahrenheit or higher)
- Extreme thirst
- Weakness and/or fatigue
- Frequent vomiting
- Disorientation
- Dark or bright red tongue and gums
- Skin around the muzzle or neck doesn't snap back when pinched (dehydration)
- Difficulty breathing

- Thick saliva
- Rapid heartbeat
- Heavy drooling
- Agitation

If you suspect that your dog is overheated, immediately take them to a cooler area or to the vet. Once in a cool room, separate their fur with your fingers so the cool air can penetrate the skin.

To cool your dog down as quickly as possible, pour cool water over their head and body, gently hose a very gentle stream of cool water over them, or, where possible, submerge them in a tub of cool water.

Even if your dog seems stable, it's a good idea to take them to the nearest vet for evaluation and treatment if necessary.

5 Summer Barbecue Safety Tips for Dog Owners

Warm weather means cookouts, pool parties, and long days spent outdoors. While most dogs love to spend time outside, there are safety precautions to keep in mind before planning your next backyard BBQ bash. Keep these five tips in mind to ensure you and your dog will have a stress-free summer cookout.

1. Make Sure Your Dog Can't Escape

It only takes one guest to leave a door or gate open for your pet to get loose. Make sure visitors know you have a dog, and if people are coming and going frequently, consider putting your dog on a lead or in a bedroom or crate.

For any dog, it's always a good idea to give your dog some private space to retreat to in case they get overwhelmed. Be proactive and give your dog intentional breaks — put your dog's bed or their crate in a quiet area of the home separate from the gathering. Puzzle toys or food-stuffed toys can keep your dog occupied. This is an especially good idea if you are going to be distracted and not able to give full attention to your dog, such as when you are putting food on the grill.

2. Keep Your Dog Cool

If your party is outdoors, be sure your pet has plenty of water and access to shade. On especially hot days, it may be best to leave your dog inside. If your pet starts showing signs of heatstroke (restlessness or agitation with vigorous panting or bright-red gums), bring them to a cooler area and contact your veterinarian immediately.

Swimming and water games can be a great way to keep your dog cool. If your pup does decide to join in on swimming, follow safety protocol and make sure they are supervised at all times.

3. Avoid Giving Them Table Scraps

Remind your guests not to give your dog any people food. Barbecued food, especially, can be greasy and upset your pet's stomach. Keep an eye on the food to make sure your dog does not grab anything. More importantly, certain foods (such as onion, avocado, and grapes) can be toxic. If you're uncertain if a food is safe for a dog or not, check our full list of cookout foods that are hazardous for dogs or ask your veterinarian before giving it to your pet. It's a good idea to make sure your dog eats their meal before your barbecue starts so they will be less tempted by hunger. If your pup is feeling left out while everyone else enjoys their meal, treat them to some BBQ-flavored dog treats.

4. Keep Your Dog Away From Fire

Safety first. Keep your dog away from the grill while you are using it. The open flame is very dangerous. Your dog should not be allowed near the grill even after you have finished cooking, as it stays hot for a while. This shouldn't be a problem if your dog is trained to stay away from the grill or if your grill is in an area inaccessible to your dog.

5. Prevent Canine Anxiety

Many summer holidays call for fireworks or other loud noises, much to the dismay of our skittish, four-legged friends. Remember that dogs don't understand those loud explosions are only for fun. Many dogs each year run away from home after being spooked by these loud sounds. Playing recordings of fireworks accompanied by treats in months ahead can help desensitize dogs to the sound of fireworks. Otherwise, confine your pet in a safe place, offer them treats during the fireworks, and/or talk to your veterinarian about medication options or possible anxiety aids (such as CBD oil for dogs).

EDITORS NOTE:

Here are some products that may help your dog through the summer heat. All are available from Amazon, Ruffwear and other manufacturers. Just google them up.

- Heat resistant dog boots – protects the dog's pads from burning on hot pavement.
- Cooling vests, mats and towels – help to keep the dog's internal temperature from overheating.
- Life Jackets – for the dog that likes to paddle in the water and on kayaks etc. And yes, there are PONs that do this!
- Travel water bottles – water access is key in hot weather.