



# PET TALK

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## Heat Stroke in Cats and Dogs

Sweltering summer days can pose a serious health threat to pets unless owners take preventive measures to protect animals from exposure to excessive heat. Heat stroke occurs in both dogs and cats (although more often in dogs) and is a life-threatening, emergency situation. Successful treatment requires early recognition and aggressive support.

Common signs of heat stroke include:

- extreme panting;
- rectal temperature greater than 106°F;
- drooling or foaming from the mouth;
- dark mucous membranes;
- rapid heart beat;
- staggering gait.

More severe signs include:

- diarrhea and/or vomiting;
- inability to move;
- unconsciousness.

There are some first aid techniques which may be administered to pets by their owners.

- Immediately spray your pet with cool, not cold,

water or immerse in a cool bath. Caution: Do not use ice water! It will actually slow the cooling process.

- Wrap pet in wet towels during transportation to your veterinary clinic.
- Lower all car windows or turn air conditioner fan on high to help with heat loss.
- If possible, check rectal temperature every 5 minutes. Stop cooling process if rectal temperature reaches 103°F.

Heat stroke can be avoided, even on the worst of days, by following a few basic rules.

- Do not confine your pet in a hot or humid environment with poor ventilation.
- Never leave pets unattended in a car even if the windows are partially lowered or the outside temperature is moderate (70°F).
- Avoid exercise under hot or humid conditions (especially on hot pavement).
- Provide free access to fresh

water at all times (multiple bowls if the pet is outside).

- Make sure outdoor pets have adequate shade.

The prognosis for heat stroke patients is variable. Animals that recover are usually those whose temperature is returned to normal early in the course of the disease and those that do not develop life-threatening complications. Although they provide a summertime challenge, following these guidelines will help you to help your pet avoid the serious dangers associated with heat stroke.

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