

BEATING THE HEAT – PROTECTING YOUR PET

Pets can be badly affected by hot weather, because they have hair/fur coats, they can't always escape hot conditions as if they were running 'free', and because they are often fed or exercised at times of day that don't suit the body. Here's a few great ideas to help get your pet through the hot weather.

WHAT TO DO

All Pets:

- Young, old, "tubby" or sick pets don't cope with heat well. Take special care with them.

Cats & Dogs

1. **Check/provide cool areas** for the pets to sleep or rest -including areas under the house, against the south walls of homes, in garages, and even under trees. Concrete paths and tin roofing are the enemy on hot days! If you can't provide a cool area, make one - ,make shade or dig a cooling hole in the soil. Tiled areas or concrete inside homes can be ideal, or try commercial cool mats.
2. **Consider taking your pet to air-conditioned work if possible, DO NOT** leave air conditioners or fans on at home if you aren't there.
3. **Hydration, Hydration, Hydration – the key to surviving heat**
 - o Loads of fresh, cool, clean water changed twice daily, or leave a tap dribbling into the bowls
 - o As many bowls in different positions as possible, so if the sun hits one, others are OK
 - o A drop of red cordial in one of the water bowls can encourage pets to drink
 - o Drop ice cubes in the water to keep it cool, or let the pet play

4. Water, Water everywhere – making heat FUN!



Thanks, Annette for "Snowy"!

- Play the hose onto pets - some will play, some will drink, some will avoid!
- Fill kiddies 'clam' pools with water for fun 'swimming'.
- Sponge pets with cool water until wet – turn the fan on for cooling.
- Consider a cooling bath for older, younger or stressed pets.
- Consider taking dogs to the beach if they like to swim...
- Freeze water in a sealed PET bottle and put into the bedding for cooling, or as a toy, or drop into water bucket for cooling.

5. Feed for the heat.

- o Feed in the cooler times in the evening, NOT in the morning
- o Put pet meat in the freezer for a delicious "frozen treat" for heat stressed pets.
- o Don't fret if your pet won't eat. A few days without eating is OK if the pet is properly hydrated. Use smaller portions than usual and ideally no treats at all.
- o Feed a higher ratio of wet food – this contains more water and is useful for rehydration.

6. Turning your pet into a couch potato

- o Keep the fitness regime till 24 hours *after* the heatwave– no walks, balls, jogging or agility.

7. Keep the Spectacles Handy – Observe!

- o Know the symptoms of Heatstroke and move FAST if you see them
- o Watch for heat *exhaustion* - even without heat stroke, the pet can be lethargic and appear ill up to 24 hours after the heatwave
- o Watch for other summer nasties that can reduce heat tolerance– ticks, sunburn and fleas



WHAT NOT TO DO

DO NOT take pets in cars unless you have to. **NEVER** leave pets in cars **FOR ANY PERIOD**, even 30 seconds.

DO NOT wrap your pet it, or lay it on wet towels. Towels are really good at making heat **WORSE!**

DO NOT leave your pet in the sun, for any reason

DO NOT think that ‘everything will be OK’ if your pet shows symptoms of heat stroke, sunburn etc. These can become emergencies quickly, and early treatment increases the chances of survival.

HEATSTROKE – A MEDICAL EMERGENCY!

Pets have a narrow range of healthy body temperature. Heatstroke happens when the body can’t properly regulate temperature and overheats inside. Heatstroke can happen any time the body’s heat regulation system is overwhelmed – after exercise, on hot days, or even when being dried with a heat dryer.

They pant until the energy involved in panting is greater than the heat being lost – then a vicious cycle develops. Symptoms include ‘brick red’ gums, desperate panting, drooling and sometimes hyper-activity. As the situation gets worse, the animal collapses and dies rapidly as internal organs including brain literally melt with the heat. Without **IMMEDIATE** attention, brain damage and death is likely.



Heat Stroke is a medical emergency. Drench the pet **IMMEDIATELY** with cold water for 5-10 minutes. Don’t pour water on the nose. Offer a drink of cold water, but don’t force them. Put a fan on, if possible. If the pet is not visibly improving after 5 minutes rush to the nearest veterinarian – soaking wet, with the air conditioner/ fan on ‘full’. **DO NOT** wrap the pet in towels/blankets (wet or dry) as towels trap heat and actually make the problem worse.

SUNBURN/HEAT BURN/FIRE BURN – MOVE EARLY OR PETS WILL SUFFER!

Dog and Cat skin can burn at as little as 44C. Inside cars and on ute trays get to 70C in 15 minutes, as can water in hoses left in the sun. Lying in the sun can burn within 10 minutes & bushfires burn *before* flames hit!

Short clipped (“summer clipped”) pets, pets with pink eyelids/noses or ears, pets with hair loss for any reason, and white pets are especially at risk. These pets **MUST** have shade. Sunscreen can be useful **BUT NOT** where pets can lick the area.

There is **ONLY ONE TREATMENT** for minor burns – **COLD RUNNING WATER** for at least 10 minutes. **DO NOT** apply compresses, towels, creams or ice – these damage delicate skin cells.



Any redness from burning should be watched – if there is **ANY** blistering, or the pet is in pain, transport to the veterinarian **IMMEDIATELY** for specialist medical treatment. Watch for signs of heatstroke on pets with sunburn as well. **ANY** burn to the feet should be seen by a veterinarian.

Long term burns, especially to the face/nose, can result in malignant skin cancers. Talk to your vet about ways to avoid this.

Many thanks to Vicki McDowall, Jenna Uhlenhut, Anita Turner, Inge McCollough, Michelle Trost, Kate Renouf, and Lyn Seng for their help with ideas to beat the heat!

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