

Heatstroke in dogs

Dogs pant to help maintain normal body temperature. When a dog cannot eliminate excessive body heat through panting, body temperature will rise to abnormally high levels causing heatstroke, also referred to as hyperthermia.

Common signs of heat stroke include excessive panting, increase heart rate, bright red tongue with pale gums, vomiting, extreme thirst and signs of discomfort. Heatstroke can cause unseen problems such as swelling of the brain, kidney failure and abnormal clotting of blood. If left untreated by a veterinarian, it can be fatal.

Any hot environment can cause heat stroke. Exercise caution whenever exposing your pet to any hot and humid conditions. Dogs with upper airway disease, long-haired dogs and short-nose/ flat faces breeds (known as brachycephalic breeds such as Pugs, Bulldogs and Shi Tzu) have more trouble moving air and may be prone to heat stroke. Heat stroke can occur in dogs left in cars on hot days even with the windows opened. Another common cause of heat stroke is not providing enough shade to an animal left outdoors. It is a good practice to never leave your dog in a vehicle unattended on hot days, be aware of ambient temperatures, and provide plenty of shade and water to your dogs.

If you suspect your dog has heat stroke, it is important to remove the dog from the hot environment immediately. If possible, wet the dog with a stream of cool water or wipe the dog down with cool, damp towels, especially the underside of your pet. Most importantly, contact your veterinarian.