

Deadly Heat

You and your dog Charlie have been best friends for the last 12 years. As a special treat you took him for a walk at the park and now your headed home. You suddenly remember that you need to pick up a few items at the store. It's 85 degrees outside, you have the windows slightly open and you're only going to be inside the store for a few minutes. You see several new items and look at them and then spot a friend and visit with them. The next thing you know it's been over 40 min. You rush outside to check on your dog, Charlie and you find him unresponsive, your best friend has died from the heat.

Signs and Symptoms of Heatstroke

On an 85-degree day it takes only 10 minutes for the interior of your parked car to climb to 102 degrees. In a half hour, it can reach over 120 degrees.

Leaving windows partially open doesn't help to cool things down inside the vehicle.

To make matters worse, dogs have a higher body temp. (101.5-102.) than people and they don't cool down as efficiently as we do. Your canine buddy is designed more for staying warm from the cold than for cooling down.

You have sweat glands all over your body, but your dog's are confined to her nose and the pads of her feet. A dog that is heating up can only normalize her body temperature through panting, which just doesn't get the job done under extreme conditions. Imagine sucking air into your lungs that is 140 degrees or higher and your barefoot standing on a surface that is over 140 degrees.

In a very short period of time, an overheated dog can suffer critical damage to her brain, heart, liver and nervous system.

Symptoms of overheating include:

- Heavy panting
- Excessive thirst
- Glazed eyes
- Vomiting and bloody diarrhea
- Bright or dark red tongue, gums

- Staggering
- Elevated body temperature (104°F and up)
- Weakness, collapse
- Increased pulse and heartbeat
- Seizures
- Excessive drooling
- Unconsciousness

If your dog's body temperature gets to 109°F or higher, heatstroke is the result. The cells of the body rapidly start to die. The brain swells, causing seizures. Lack of blood supply to the GI tract creates ulcers. Dehydration leads to irreversible kidney damage. All these catastrophic events take place within a matter of minutes, and within those minutes it can cost a life.

In the early stages of a heat-related illness it can be difficult to assess your dog's condition, since it's normal for him to pant when he's warm or while exerting himself.

I recommend you learn from your Veterinarian how to properly how to take your dog's temperature and invest in a digital thermometer that you designate for animal use only. This knowledge and instrument could come in very handy if you think your dog is becoming or has become overheated.

I can't stress enough how important it is for dog owners to take every precaution to keep their pets from getting overheated. An additional risk that is not thought of is riding a dog in the bed of a truck. At 90 degrees the surface of the truck bed can easily reach 140 to 150 degrees. Imagine standing barefoot on this and with a dog it cools by panting and through the pads on it's feet. It would be very difficult to cool down while standing on a surface that is 150 degrees. **Arkansas 5-62-103 Offense of Cruelty to Animals** has a section that states: Carries or causes to be carried in or upon any motorized vehicle or boat an animal in a cruel or inhumane manner.

By the time a dog is exhibiting symptoms of heatstroke, it's often too late to save him.

Dogs at Higher Risk

If your dog is one of the following, you'll need to be extra vigilant about keeping her safe from heat-related illness:

1. Dogs with flat faces and short noses, also known as brachycephalic, like Pugs, Boston Terriers, Pekinese, Boxers, Bulldogs, Shih Tzus – these breeds don't pant as efficiently as breeds with longer noses
2. Older dogs
3. Puppies
4. Sick dogs and those with chronic health conditions like heart disease
5. Dogs not acclimated to warm weather
6. Any healthy dog left outside in hot weather
7. Dogs that are over-exercised or are allowed to overexert themselves in the heat

What to Do If Your Dog Gets Overheated

If you think your dog (or any dog) is suffering from heatstroke, you need to take immediate action:

- Move him immediately to a cool area – either into the shade or preferably into air conditioning.
- Assess his condition – is he able to stand? Is he conscious and panting? If so, offer him small amounts of water to drink and take his temperature if possible.
- If he's at 104°F or lower, remain with him in a cool environment, watch him carefully and keep offering small drinks of water. A large volume of water all at once might cause him to vomit, which will add to the risk of dehydration.
- When he seems more comfortable, call your veterinarian for next steps. The doctor may want to evaluate your dog even if he seems fully recovered.
- If your pet is unable to stand on her own, is unresponsive to your voice, touch or the sight of you, or is having seizures, check for breathing and a heartbeat.
- At the same time, have someone contact a veterinary hospital (or make the call yourself if you're alone with your pet) to let them know you'll be bringing her in right away. It's important to alert the clinic you're on the way so they can prepare for your arrival.
- Begin cooling procedures by soaking her body with cool water – cool, but not cold. Use a hose, wet towels or any other source of cool water that is handy. Take her temperature if possible.

- Concentrate the cooling water on her head, neck and in the areas underneath her front and back legs. Carefully cool her tongue if possible, but don't let water run into her throat as it could get into her lungs. Never put water in a dog's mouth that can't swallow on its own. Put a fan on her if possible – it will speed up the cooling process.
- After a few minutes, re-check her temperature. If her temp is at or below 104 degrees, stop the cooling process. Further cooling could lead to blood clotting or a too-low body temperature. Get her to a veterinary clinic right away, even if she seems to be recovering.
- **How to Keep Your Dog Safe from the Heat All Summer Long**
- Dogs can dehydrate very quickly, so make sure yours has **plenty of fresh, clean water available at all times**. If he'll be outside on warm days for any length of time, he should have access to complete shade. Use a plastic bowl to keep the water from heating up fast.
- Give your dog a **shorter summer 'do**. A long-coated dog can be shaved to a one-inch length to help him weather the hot temperatures. Don't go any shorter than an inch, though, because his fur protects him from the sun. If you don't want to cut your dog's coat, regular brushing, bathing and grooming will help prevent problems caused by excessive heat.
- **Exercise your pup early in the morning or after the sun goes down**, during the coolest parts of the day. Stay in the shade if possible, and if it's 90 degrees or hotter, your dog should be kept indoors.
- **Play in the sprinkler with your dog or hose him down with cool water** if he must stay outside and can't avoid temperatures over 90 degrees.
- **Don't overdo exercise or play sessions**, regardless of the time of day. Over exertion in hot weather -- even after dark -- can bring on heat-related health problems.
- **Don't allow your dog on the hot pavement** – it can burn his paws and the heat rising from the concrete or asphalt can quickly overheat your low-to-the-ground pet.
- **Cut down the food intake** – it is harder on a fat and out of shape dog, your animal does not need all the extra calories.
- And, of course, **never leave your dog alone in a parked car** on a warm day. Leave him where he's cool, hydrated, and eagerly awaiting your return.

The loss of a dearly loved pet is difficult enough when death is expected and the passing is painless. But losing a canine member of the family to an avoidable case of heatstroke is an event many pet owners never forgive themselves for.

Leaving a pet unattended in a vehicle in extreme heat or cold is currently a criminal offense in all 50 states, in Arkansas it falls under **5-62-103 Offense of cruelty to animals** (Class A Misdemeanor) however if the animal dies the person can and may be charged with **Arkansas 5 -62-104 Offense of aggravated cruelty to a dog, cat or horse**. (Class D felony). .

No matter where you live, if you see a pet confined in an unattended vehicle in extreme weather, contact your local Law Enforcement Agency / Animal Control Agency. Minutes count in these situations, to do nothing or not get involved may cost this animal a violent death.

Estimated Vehicle Interior Air Temperature v. Elapsed Time

Elapsed time	Outside Air Temperature (F)					
	70	75	80	85	90	95
0 minutes	70	75	80	85	90	95
10 minutes	89	94	99	104	109	114
20 minutes	99	104	109	114	119	124
30 minutes	104	109	114	119	124	129
40 minutes	108	113	118	123	128	133
50 minutes	111	116	121	126	131	136
60 minutes	113	118	123	128	133	138
> 1 hour	115	120	125	130	135	140

Courtesy Jan Null, CCM; Department of Geosciences, San Francisco State University

This is a general estimation chart; temperatures can vary from different factors, color of interior or exterior, size of vehicle,

Jonesboro Animal Control (870) - 935-3920

Jonesboro Police Dispatch (870) - 935-5551

Jonesboro Police Department (870) – 935-5562