

Hot Weather Tips For You and Your Pet By Lydia House

As the weather warms up you'll find yourself seeking shade or an air conditioned home. Being overheated and not having a way to cool down can be extremely uncomfortable and exhausting. We can change into our summer wardrobe of shorts, tank tops and swim suits; but imagine how your pet feels. They can't take off their fur to cool down. If we don't provide them with access to shade and cool areas our pets can face serious medical issues and even death.

A dog's normal body temperature is in the range of 101-102.5 degrees, 103 degrees and above is considered a fever. When a dog suffers from heat stroke their internal temperatures can reach 107-108 degrees. Within a short time of reaching that high temperature brain damage or death can occur.

Symptoms and signs of overheating include excessive heavy panting, difficulty breathing, rapid heart and respiratory rate, drooling, weakness, and collapsing. If you see any of these signs in your pet remove him from the heat, preferably into an air conditioned building or home. Apply cool water (not ice water) by spray bottle or garden hose to the body of the dog. Cool pads can be applied to the dog's pads and the groin area. If diarrhea or seizures occur call your vet immediately.

First and foremost, never, ever leave your pet in a vehicle on a warm day. It can take merely a few minutes for the temperature inside a parked car to reach 120 degrees, that's even with the windows cracked. Don't count on parking in the shade, the sun shifts during the day and shade offers little protection. If you take your dog with you on a trip in the car remember to carry water for him/her to drink.

Avoid exercising your dog during the hottest part of the day. Go for walks or jogs in the early morning or evening when the temperatures are cooler. Remember dogs don't sweat like people. If it's too hot for you, it's too hot for your dog. Even playing fetch can be too much in hot weather.

Always provide shade and fresh cool water for your dog if they are kept outside. Pets can get dehydrated quickly. A dog house can offer protection from the sun but it would be best to bring them inside on extremely hot days. Never leave your pet in a dog run or area that is completely cement or asphalt. Offering a kiddie pool is a good way to let your water-loving dog cool off in the backyard.

Be sensitive to dogs with flat faces or snub-nosed breeds (brachycephalic dogs). These breeds (Bulldogs, Pekingese, Boston terriers, etc) have an even harder time breathing in hot or humid weather.

Watch out for coolant leaking from vehicles. Animals are attracted to the sweet taste of this toxic liquid. They will lick it off the ground and drink from containers left in their reach. Just a small amount can kill a dog or cat.