

## **Ask the Vet: How do I need to care for my pet when it's hot?**

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So far, I don't think this summer has broken any heat records, but it is certainly good to be aware that the hot weather can adversely affect our animals. Dogs don't normally sweat much, so most of their extra heat is dissipated through panting. When it is very hot and humid, your dog is going to be as uncomfortable as you are, especially if it is used to being in the air conditioned house. If your pet is outdoors, adequate shade and plenty of water are necessary to keep it healthy. On the very hottest days of the year, it may be necessary to bring your dog into a garage or other building that is cooler and out of the sun. Long walks and excessive exercise should be avoided during the hottest part of the day. Take your dog out in the morning or evening when it is cooler. And remember – don't leave your unattended in a hot car! In only a few minutes, even with the windows cracked, the temperature climbs rapidly and can be extremely dangerous.

Dogs certainly can get heat stroke, just like humans, on a hot day. Old or young animals, those overweight or obese, and brachycephalic dogs (those with short noses, like bulldogs) are more prone to heat stroke. Some signs include excessive panting, having trouble catching their breath, and dark red or bluish gums or extremities. In these cases, treatment should be initiated right away to reduce the animal's body temperature and increase fluids. We often need to catheterize the animal and get cooled IV fluids into them, as well as other methods to rapidly reduce the body temperature. If left untreated or if the temperature gets too hot, the damage can be irreversible and even deadly. Therefore, prevention is the best solution.

Working with livestock during the heat of the day can also be taxing on the animals as well as the people. During the summer, I try to limit livestock work to the mornings as it is much less stressful on them and myself.

Summer is a great time to enjoy the outdoors, but use some common sense to keep yourself and your animals safe and happy.