

# Summerize Your Pet

*By Brenda Howard*

Flip-flops, shorts and snow cones help us 2-leggers to beat the summer heat. Plan now for ways to help your dog through the summer heat too!

Dogs cool themselves through panting and by sweat glands on the bottom of their feet and on their noses. Dogs with shortened muzzles (Brachycephalic from Greek roots “Brachy,” meaning short and “cephalic,” meaning head) such as Pugs, Bulldogs, Pekinese, Boston Terriers, and Shih Tzus have difficulty dealing with the extreme temperatures we experience in Texas. The foreshortened face can have a number of structural problems that in combination prevent adequate cooling through panting. These types of dogs should be kept indoors in hot temperatures and only taken outdoors for very brief “potty” trips.

ANY dog can suffer and die from heat exposure. Black dogs in particular suffer in the sun. Your dog’s outdoor environment should have plenty of deep shade at ALL times of the day – plan the shade by keeping in mind that the sun moves! A self-waterer or water source that is shaded throughout the day should be available at all times. Even an inexpensive child’s wading pool can make all the difference in keeping your dog safe in extreme heat.

Heat Stroke or Heat Exhaustion are terms used to describe the situation that occurs in mammals when they cannot regulate their internal body temperature as a result of heat or a combination of heat and humidity. A dog’s normal body temperature is between 101 and 103 degrees. Any temperature above 103 is considered elevated.

Symptoms of Heat Stroke can include, excessive panting or snorting, lethargy, and an elevated body temperature. Your dog may begin to stumble or move oddly as a result of dizziness. At 105 degrees body temperature, it is difficult for a dog to maintain control of bodily functions. At this point, the dog may collapse and be unable to get up. The dog may then appear unconscious. The gums may turn to a muddy pink and the ears may appear flushed. At 108 to 110 degrees, internal organs become affected and cell damage will begin to occur. Brain damage and death can follow rapidly at such high body temperatures.

If you suspect your dog is suffering from heat stroke, immediately cease all activity. Your instinct might be to rush the dog to your veterinarian, but cooling the dog FIRST is important. Place the dog in a tub of cool water, or use cool running water from a lawn hose to help bring the dog’s body temperature down. Place ice bags around the dog’s head, neck and private areas. Place a fan on the dog to help cool by evaporation. Contact your veterinarian as soon as you believe the dog is stable. Your vet may want you to bring the dog in for evaluation and to take further steps to stabilize the situation. As with people, once a dog has experienced an episode of heat exhaustion, he will be more susceptible to future heat problems.

Never leave your dog in a car. The inside temperature of a car climbs rapidly in the sun even on days with relatively mild tempera-

tures. It is impossible to crack the windows of your car enough to allow proper airflow for temperature regulation. The same precautions you would take for children apply to dogs regarding heat and cars!

If you have a swimming pool, and you allow your dog pool time, make certain your dog knows where the steps into and out of the pool are! Most dogs can swim and learn to enjoy it, but dogs can easily drown if they are unable to find the pool exit. If you have any doubts about your dog’s ability to enter and exit the pool, restrict the dogs access to the pool to the times you are able to be with him.

If you enjoy walking with your dog, keep in mind that your shoes protect your feet from the hot pavement and grass burrs – your dog doesn’t wear shoes and needs your “cool” thinking to keep his feet safe. Do not walk your dog on hot asphalt! Be aware of the environment!

If your dog is fair skinned – has light coloration on his lips, around his eyes and nose – use sunscreen to protect him from potential skin damage. There are a number of products designed for use on dogs. Generally, if the sunscreen is safe for children, it is safe for your dog. Check with your veterinarian for specific recommendations.

Want to give your dog some late evening fun outdoor treats?! Once the sun has gone down, and the temperature is tolerable, give your dog ice cubes to play with and eat.

Freeze chicken broth mixed with water in cubes for a treat your dog will really enjoy! Obviously this is a treat best enjoyed outside because of the potential mess!

Brenda Howard has been training dogs for over 20 years and is a *member of The Association of Pet Dog Trainers, The American Bloodhound Club, and The American Boarding Kennels Association.*

*The information presented here is not intended to substitute for the advice and care of a veterinarian. Please consult your veterinarian regarding all issues relating to your dog’s health.*



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