

HEAT STROKE

VETERINARY SPECIALISTS OF NORTH TEXAS

WHAT IS HEAT STROKE?

Heat stroke occurs when your pet's temperature rises above normal because of the environment. Usually this condition occurs when pets are left in unattended cars or strenuously exercised. Because pets do not sweat, they can become over-heated **very quickly**.

WHAT ARE SIGNS OF HEAT STROKE?

Pets that are over-heated will often pant excessively and seem weak. They may not want to move around much and in some instances will actually collapse from heat exhaustion. The most revealing sign that a pet has heat stroke is to take their temperature. Normal temperature is 100-102.5 degrees. Patients suffering from heat stroke often have temperatures of 104 degrees or higher.

WHAT CAN I DO IF I THINK MY PET HAS HEAT STROKE?

Although it is tempting, if you think your pet has heat stroke, do not pour cold water on them or immerse them into cold water. This can cool them too quickly. It is better to lay moist towels (moistened with cool water or room temperature water) and lay them on your pet while you contact a veterinarian.

HOW IS HEAT STROKE TREATED?

Treatment initially consists of cooling your pet down. This is done most effectively with IV fluids and controlled cooling by a veterinarian. Heat stroke can also affect other organs in the body; such as the kidneys, liver, stomach and blood clotting system. Because of its multi-organ effect, monitoring blood tests and maintenance on IV fluids may need to be continued over several days.

WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO PREVENT HEAT STROKE?

NEVER leave your pet in an unattended car. Even if it may not feel hot outside, the temperature inside the car can reach extremely high temperatures very quickly (as short as 5-10 minutes) Leaving the windows slightly open does not allow enough ventilation, and as a result, the temperature will still rise rapidly inside the car.

It is also a good idea to plan your pet's activities. Do not allow a lot of exercise during the afternoon, when it is the hottest. When exercising your pet, make sure that there is plenty of fresh, cool water and that you take breaks during strenuous exercise. If you anticipate that your pet may be walking on a hot surface (such as pavement or concrete), paw protection (boots or adhesive film) is also recommended to prevent heat injury to the foot pads.

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