



Heatstroke and Your Pet

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Taking your dog along for summer adventures in Colorado can be fun for everyone, but precautions must be taken to keep Fido safe as well. The summer sun can be dangerous for humans and pets alike. While keeping yourself hydrated and cool, remember to take care of your dog as well.

Heat stroke is a state of elevated core body temperature that results in thermal injury to tissues. This elevated temperature can cause problems in nearly every organ system if left untreated. Heat stroke occurs when heat generation exceeds the body's ability to dissipate the heat. Dogs cool themselves primarily by panting. There are two major classifications of heat stroke, classic and exertional. Classic heat stroke is generally due to confinement in a poorly ventilated area (such as a car on a hot day) and tends to be less common than exertional heat stroke. Exertional heat stroke is associated with physical activity, such as hiking, running or even swimming on a hot day. Dogs that are overweight, have short noses (such as pugs or bulldogs), or suffer from laryngeal paralysis are more likely to suffer from exertional heat stroke.

When out with your dog, avoid being in the sun during the hottest part of the day. Offer him water as often as you drink yourself – every 15-20 minutes while exercising. Be sure that he has access to clean cool water at all times when confined. Do not leave him in a car when the sun is out, even with the windows down. Watch for signs that he may be slowing down or need to rest, and allow him to do so as needed.

Signs of heat stroke in dogs are elevated temperature (above 102.5 degrees), increased heart rate (which can be felt through the chest in some dogs), increased breathing rate (panting), and the gums (mucous membranes) may appear bright red. As the heat stroke progresses, dogs may also begin vomiting and/or have diarrhea. If left untreated, symptoms such as ataxia (walking drunkenly), seizures, and unresponsiveness may also be seen.

If you think your dog is overheated, it is important to start cooling him right away and seek veterinary care immediately. Use cool (but not cold) water via a hose or towels to wet your dog. Circulating air will help to cool quickly as well, so use a blowing fan if feasible. Then, get to a veterinary clinic as soon as possible.

Once at the veterinary clinic your veterinarian will likely want to place a catheter to give IV fluids, run some basic lab work and hospitalize your pet for observation. The lab work

will tell your doctor which organs have been affected and the severity of the problems. Since heat stroke can affect major organs, medications may also be prescribed to help fight off infection and protect the gastro-intestinal system.

It is important to note that even with prompt and aggressive veterinary treatment, the prognosis for dogs with heat stroke is guarded. The full extent of the damage to your dog's systems may not be fully realized for 2-3 days after treatment is started.

For more information regarding Heatstroke and your pet, go to www.AspenMeadowVet.com.