

EXCESSIVE HEAT AND YOUR PETS

Natural Disasters



Extreme heat situations can be hazardous to your pets. Animals can overheat, suffer dehydration, and even die in hot weather. Heat-related illnesses can be prevented if proper measures are taken.

Before Excessive Heat Situations

- **Establish cool housing areas.**
 - Establish areas indoors or outdoors for extreme heat situations – cool basement, shade from a tree, doghouse or other shelter to protect from the heat.

During Excessive Heat Situations

- **Keep pets cool.**
 - Keep pets indoors as much as possible.
 - Use a hose or let your pet swim in a kiddie pool, lake or stream to cool off.
- **Cool water.**
 - Make sure your pet has access to cool, clean water.
 - Check the water bowl frequently throughout the day as pets will drink more during high temperatures.
- **Limit or restrict exercise.**
 - Exercise of any kind should be cut back and limited to the cooler, early morning or later evening hours.
 - Avoid midday heat.
- **Limit sun exposure.**
 - Dogs and cats can get sunburned just like people, especially their ears and noses.
- **Avoid burned pads on your pet's feet.**
 - Avoid walking your dog on hot surfaces, such as pavement, asphalt, or metal.
 - Walk your pet in the grass.
 - **Signs of burned pads:** limping or refusing to walk • licking or chewing at the feet • pads are darker in color • part of the pad is missing
 - If you notice a problem, flush the pad and foot with cool water or a cool compress; get the pet to a grassy area, or if possible carry him.
 - Contact your veterinarian to examine your pet for signs of deeper burns, blisters and possibly infection.
- **Never leave pets in a parked car.**
 - Each year pets die from extreme heat after being left in parked vehicles.
 - Cars can heat up to dangerous temperatures very quickly – even within minutes.

- **Monitor your pet for signs of heat-related illness.**
 - Watch your pet for signs of tiring and too much panting.
 - Brachycephalic breeds (i.e., short-nosed breeds, such as bulldogs and pugs), large heavy-coated breeds, and those dogs with heart or respiratory problems are more at risk for heat stroke.

Heat-Related Illnesses

- **If you see any of these signs, get veterinary attention immediately!**
- **Heat stroke is a life-threatening situation!**
 - Occurs when the body is unable to regulate its temperature and cool itself.
 - **Signs:** extremely high body temperature (above 104-110°F) • excessive panting • dark or bright red tongue and gums • sticky or dry tongue and gums • staggering, stupor, seizures • bloody diarrhea or vomiting • nausea • unconsciousness
 - Pets can go into a coma or die from heat stroke.
- **Heat stress.**
 - A milder form of heat-related illness that can develop after several days of exposure to high temperatures and inadequate or unbalanced replacement of fluids.
 - **Signs:** heavy panting • glazed eyes • rapid pulse • unsteadiness or staggering • vomiting • weakness
- **Sunburn.**
 - Animals with pink skin are at great risk of sunburn.
- **Actions to take:**
 - Contact your veterinarian immediately!
 - Move pet to a shaded/air conditioned area.
 - Apply ice packs or cold towels to your pet's head, neck, and chest.
 - Do not cool your pet too quickly.
 - Let your pet drink small amounts of cool water or lick ice cubes, but do not force ice or water to your pet.

Development of this educational material was by the Center for Food Security and Public Health with funding from the Multi-State Partnership for Security in Agriculture MOU-2010-HSEMD-004. June 2010.

