

Heat Stroke is Preventable

By Christina Marrara-Kinkade DVM

Imagine. You're in your car on a gloriously warm sunny day. The windows are rolled up, there's no air conditioning, and you are locked in.

It would get pretty hot pretty quickly, right? Now imagine you have a fur coat.

Heat stroke occurs when a pet's body temperature rises above normal and the body cannot tolerate the temperature or get rid of the heat. Temperatures comfortable to humans or pets can rise rapidly in a closed car, putting your pet in danger. An outside temperature of 75 degrees can quickly heat the inside of a closed car to 118 degrees.



If overheating, your pet will pant heavily in an attempt to cool down, but it's not enough. Your pet will become extremely thirsty, he may have bloody diarrhea, he may vomit, and there may be seizures, weakness, collapse, and unconsciousness. His body temperature may be 104 degrees or higher, which can lead to death. Heat stroke can cause multiple body systems to shut down. The brain can swell, ulcers can form in the intestines, kidneys can fail. Intensive care treatment in a veterinary hospital is required to attempt life-saving measures.

If you suspect your pet or a stray is suffering heat stroke, immediately get him to a veterinary emergency hospital. During transport, spray the pet with water and use rubbing alcohol on the foot pads, "arm pits" and groin. Don't use ice, as this can impede heat dissipation by constricting the blood vessels.

Heat stroke is completely preventable. Dogs at higher risk include flat-faced/short-nosed dogs (brachycephalic), senior dogs, puppies, and dogs with chronic health conditions. Keep long-haired dogs properly groomed, exercise in the early morning/evening without exertion, and stay off hot pavement. Above all, NEVER leave your pet alone in a parked car. Leaving your pet in a locked car in the heat is actually a criminal offense in 14 states. Unfortunately, Washington & Oregon are not yet one of those states. Let's work on changing that. If you see a pet locked in a car, report it.

Please, protect your pet. Following the above easy steps will prevent heat stroke in your pet. You can save his life.

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