



SASKATCHEWAN
SPCA

factsheet



HOT WEATHER CARE **HEATSTROKE**

WHAT IS HEATSTROKE?

Heatstroke is a life-threatening condition in which the dog's body temperature rises to dangerous levels. This can result in organ damage and even death.

There are a number of risk factors for the development of heatstroke. These include being locked in a hot environment, such as a car; having a history of heatstroke, heart and/or lung problems; or being very active. As well animals that are very old or very young, obese, long-haired and/or dark coloured are also at risk.

The symptoms of heatstroke include:

- > Rapid panting
- > Red or pale gums
- > Bright red tongue
- > Thick, sticky saliva
- > Glazed eyes
- > Depression
- > Weakness
- > Dizziness
- > Convulsions
- > Vomiting
- > Diarrhea
- > Collapse and/or coma

HOW IS HEATSTROKE TREATED?

Heatstroke is a veterinary emergency and your dog should be taken to a veterinarian immediately!

However, if it is necessary for you to treat your dog yourself, take the following steps. Move the dog to a cool location and soak him/her in tap water (approx. 20°C). **Do not use ice or very cold water.** Monitor your dog's internal temperature throughout the cooling process and stop cooling when their temperature reaches 39°C. At that point, your dog's own cooling mechanisms will enable them to self-regulate their body temperature.

HOW CAN I PREVENT HEATSROKE?



Make sure that your pets always have access to clean, fresh water! Also, make sure they have access to shade and limit their exercise, particularly during the hottest parts of the day.



Hot sidewalks can burn the pads of your dog's feet. Remember the 5-second rule. Hold the back of your hand on the pavement. If you cannot keep it there for 5 seconds, it is too hot to walk your dog on the pavement. On the hotter days of summer, consider walking your dog later at night or early in the morning.



In hot weather, you could take your dog for a swim to burn off excess energy. If your dogs are not swimmers or you want to keep them dry, consider using a commercially available cooling wrap or vest.

A NOTE ABOUT CATS

When we think of heatstroke in pets, we tend to think about it affecting dogs. Cats are also susceptible to heatstroke if kept in an excessively warm environment without adequate access to shade and water. The symptoms and treatment of heatstroke in cats are the same as those in dogs. Prevent heatstroke by making sure your cats always have access to fresh, clean water and to cool, shady areas where they can escape from the heat.



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