

# Heatstroke In Dogs

## Overview

- Heatstroke is sadly a common problem in dogs during the summer – even in the UK!
- Heatstroke can cause organ failure and death if it isn't treated in time.
- Heatstroke is more of a problem for overweight dogs, dogs with a thick-coat and flat-faced breeds (e.g. Bulldog).
- Never leave your dog unattended in a car.
- Never over-exercise your dog on a hot day.
- If you see symptoms of heatstroke in your dog, start slowly cooling them and take them to the vet immediately.



## What is heatstroke?

Heatstroke or hyperthermia is when body temperature starts to rise above normal (38.6C/101.5F). If your dog's temperature stays too high for too long, their organs will start to fail and they may die.

Unlike us, dogs can't sweat to lose body heat, they can only pant. Overweight dogs, flat faced breeds (e.g. Pug) and dogs with thick coats are more at risk of heatstroke.

Being left or trapped in a small, hot space or over-exercising on a hot day are two of the most common causes of heatstroke.



## Symptoms

The symptoms of heatstroke are:

- Excessive panting
- Red gums
- Weakness
- Confusion
- Vomiting and diarrhoea
- Collapse

- Unconsciousness
- Seizures
- Death

## When to contact your vet

Contact your vet urgently for an emergency appointment if your dog is showing signs of heatstroke. Your vet may advise you to try cooling your dog on the way to them. Use cool water baths/showers/wet towels. The sooner you get your dog cool, the better their chance of a full recovery. **Never use very cold water or ice to cool your dog down – this could cause shock.**

## Treatment

Your vet will use cool showers, wet towels, baths, fans and air-conditioners to reduce your dog's body temperature. They may put your dog on a drip and if they don't recover quickly, run some blood tests to check their organ function. Your vet will need to keep your dog hospitalised, under close watch, until they start to recover.

## Ongoing care

Once your dog has stabilised, they will be sent home for monitoring – you will need to keep a close eye on them and let your vet know if they deteriorate. You will need to take all possible precautions to prevent them developing heatstroke again.

## Outlook

Your dog is likely to make a full recovery from heatstroke if their body temperature comes down in time. If it isn't, and your dog suffers organ damage, the condition can be much more serious and your dog is likely to take longer to recover. Sadly, left too long, it's possible for a dog to die from heatstroke.

## Prevention

- Never leave your dog in a hot car/shed/conservatory.
- Always make sure your dog has access to shade and water.
- Don't over-exercise your dog on a hot day, only walk them early in the morning or late in the evening when it's cool outside.
- Don't let your dog get overweight.
- If your dog has a heavy coat, have them clipped to keep them comfortable and safe. Some breeds shouldn't be clipped, so speak to your vet or a groomer for advice.
- Cool your dog down with cool (not cold) water if they are getting hot.



## Cost

Emergency treatment for a poorly pet can be very expensive, especially if they need hospital treatment for several days. Consider insuring your dog as soon as you get them, before any problems start. This will ensure you have all the support you need to care for them.

It's also very important to speak openly to your vet about your finances, the cost of treatment, as well as what you think is right for your dog.

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