

12 Signs Your Dog Is Too Hot

Once your dog's body temperature reaches this point, it's cause for concern as it only takes a few more degrees for potentially fatal heatstroke to occur. Know the right way to cool your dog down - making this mistake can make the blood vessels shrink and prevent excess heat from being released.

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STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Taking precautions — and watching out for signs of heat stress — will ensure your dog stays safe and cool all summer long
- When taking walks, stick to early morning or evening to take advantage of cooler times of day
- Avoid hot pavement, which can burn your pet's paws and lead to overheating; stick to walks on cool grass instead
- When it's warm outside, be sure your dog always has access to shade and cool water
- Watch out for signs of overheating, such as excessive panting and drooling, elevated body temperature, glazed eyes and weakness

As temperatures rise in summer, pets can become easily overheated outdoors or in vehicles. Taking precautions — and watching out for signs of heat stress — will ensure your dog stays safe and cool all summer long.

Remember, it's not only the temperature that matters when it comes to heat safety for pets. Humidity also matters. "Animals pant to evaporate moisture from their lungs, which takes heat away from their body," says Dr. Barry Kellogg with the Humane Society Veterinary Medical Association in a news release. "If the humidity is too high, they are unable to cool themselves and their temperature will skyrocket to dangerous levels — very quickly."¹

When it's warm outside, be sure your dog always has access to shade and cool water — and bring them indoors to an air-conditioned space regularly to cool off. Shade should come from a tree, tarp or covered porch, for example, because they allow air to flow freely. A dog house won't do, as it may amplify the heat.²

Practical Precautions in the Summer Months

While you may be tempted to shave your dog's long coat in the summer, this can be counterproductive.

"Their coat is designed to not only keep them warm during the winter but cool during the summer," Houston SPCA veterinarian Dr. Roberta Westbrook told KPRC 2 News. "So what happens is, if we shave those dogs down, we may be doing more harm than good. Now their skin is going to be exposed to sunlight and it could put them at risk for sunburn."³

A **nontoxic, dog-safe sunscreen** can be used to protect your dog from sunburn. This is especially important if your dog is hairless or has a pink or light-colored nose, short coat or white coat — or if they spend a lot of time lying with their belly up.

When taking walks, stick to early morning or evening to take advantage of cooler times of day. And be careful to avoid hot pavement. “Even in the 80s or 90s, the concrete can reach up to 140 degrees.”

“That means your pet can suffer burns between seconds,” Westbrook says.⁴ Not only that, but the heat rising from concrete or asphalt can quickly overheat an animal that is close to the ground. If possible, walk your dog on grass to avoid hot surfaces, and limit exercise outdoors on very hot days.

Don't Leave Your Dog in a Vehicle, Even if It's 'Not That Hot'

Dogs should not be left in vehicles in the summer months, even if it feels mild outside. The temperature inside a car can reach 116 degrees F in just 10 minutes, even on a 70-degree day.⁵ In Salt Lake City, Utah, animal control officers receive more than 500 calls about dogs left in hot cars every year.⁶

It's also not OK to leave your pet in a vehicle that's running with the air conditioner on. As noted by The Humane Society of the United States, “On an 85-degree day, for example, the temperature inside a car with the windows opened slightly can reach 102 degrees within 10 minutes. After 30 minutes, the temperature will reach 120 degrees. Your pet may suffer irreversible organ damage or die.”⁷

Know the Signs of Heatstroke

If your dog's body temperature gets to 109 degrees F or higher, heatstroke is the result. However, a temperature over 103 degrees F is cause for concern.⁸ I recommend you learn from your dog's vet how to take his temperature (it must be done rectally), and invest in a digital thermometer that you designate for doggie use only.

It could come in handy if you're ever concerned your dog is overheated and need to know his body temperature. However, if in doubt, seek emergency veterinary care right away.

Any dog can be affected, but some dogs are at greater risk of heatstroke than others, including brachycephalic breeds (dogs with flat faces and short noses), seniors, puppies and dogs with chronic health conditions. Symptoms of overheating include:

- Elevated body temperature
- Weakness, collapse
- Heavy panting or rapid breathing
- Bright or dark red tongue, gums
- Excessive drooling
- Staggering, stumbling
- Glazed eyes
- Vomiting, bloody diarrhea

- Excessive thirst
- Seizures
- Increased pulse and heartbeat
- Unconsciousness

If your dog's temperature is 104 degrees or lower — and he's standing and alert — offer him small drinks of water and cool him down by soaking his body using cool (not cold) water or a wet towel. Do not use ice or ice water. Westbrook explains:⁹

"If we take something very cold like ice and we put it directly on the skin, the blood vessels say 'oh it's cold, and the vessels shrink up and they become more narrow. When that happens, you're not able to release heat as well. We don't want to put ice on them and we don't want to submerge them in an icy bath."

At this point, you should get your dog to a veterinary clinic immediately, even if he seems to be recovering. Prevention is by far the best option, as by the time your dog exhibits symptoms of heatstroke, it may be too late to save him.

Keep Your Dog Cool This Summer

In addition to providing plenty of shade, filtered, fresh, cool water and access to air conditioning, if possible, give your pet a chance to play in a sprinkler or baby pool if he's interested. Some dogs also enjoy a gentle spray with a hose — just be careful of water intoxication. And, for a special treat on hot summer day, offer your pet a homemade bone broth popsicle — it's the perfect way for your pet to cool off while enjoying a healthy snack.

Sources and References

^{1, 2, 7} [The Humane Society of the United States, Keep Pets Safe in the Heat](#)

^{3, 4, 9} [Click 2 Houston June 10, 2022](#)

^{5, 6} [Fox 13 May 24, 2022](#)

⁸ [Houston SPCA, Beat the Heat: Pet safety in high temperatures](#)
