

Heat Stroke

As the days start getting warmer it's time to start thinking about keeping our pets cooler. In Arizona we experience extreme heat in the summer. Some dogs, such as brachycephalic, or "smush faced" breeds (pugs, bulldogs, french bulldogs, shih tzus, etc), have congenital malformations that make it difficult for them to breathe in the best of conditions. Add extreme heat to the mix and it's a recipe for respiratory distress. Dogs that like to play and run all day can easily develop heat stroke from extended periods of activity. Heat stroke can be deadly. Signs of heat stroke include increased respiratory rate and effort, elevated heart rate, vomiting, diarrhea, ataxia (difficulty walking) seizures, etc.

Leaving pets unattended in a car is another common cause of heat stroke and even death. When it is 70 degrees outside, the temperature inside a car can rise to 90 degrees within ten minutes, and rise to over 100 degrees within 30 minutes. Cracking windows does not effectively improve ventilation. Dogs cannot sweat; they pant to dispel heat. At 80 degrees panting is less efficient. Due to poor ventilation, panting actually increases the temperature inside a car. A few minutes alone in a hot car can be fatal.

Hot pavement and asphalt are another summer danger. These surfaces can reach over 140 degrees on hot days, which will severely damage a dog's feet. Pets can also get sunburns, so using a pet safe sunscreen (such as California Baby Super Sensitive Sunscreen SPF +30) will prevent burns. Plenty of water should always be made available for your pet whether inside or outside. Pets should not be left outside, even with shade, in extreme heat.

Please remember that dogs cannot dissipate heat as well as we can, especially in the extreme temperatures that will be here shortly. Heat stroke is a serious and deadly condition, and always caused accidentally with the best of intentions. Even regular activities in the summer heat such as hiking, walking, and car rides can turn deadly if we are not careful. Don't take any chances with your four legged family members!

