

IN SUMMER'S HEAT, PREVENT CANINE HEAT EXHAUSTION

MANHATTAN -- It's not just the canine athletes -- the Frisbee leapers, the runners and jumpers -- that are susceptible to heat exhaustion. Every dog is a potential victim of summer's heat. One of the most common causes of heat stroke is leaving an animal in a hot car. "Even on an 80 degree day, the temperature inside a car can get up to 130 degrees fairly quickly," said Dr. William Fortney, a veterinarian with Kansas State University's Veterinary Medical Teaching Hospital. "Leaving a window cracked doesn't prevent heat build-up."

Fortney says leaving a dog in a car on a warm day is risking the dog's life.

"Dogs don't sweat, and they don't have an efficient way to cool themselves down. If they are panting, it may be because they need the oxygen because they've been exercising, or it may mean they are trying to get rid of built-up heat in their bodies."

Long coats also hold in body heat. Clipping the dog's coat a little shorter for summer will also help to keep the dog cooler, Fortney said. "Be sure not to shave the dog, though, because that could lead to sunburn, which would be very painful for the dog."

Black dogs absorb the sun's rays, so they get hot more quickly than lighter-colored dogs.

Fortney says it is impossible to give specific recommendations on how long dogs can be out in the sun exercising.

"There are so many variables, depending on the physical condition of the dog, its age, its coat length, its breed," he said. "A well-conditioned dog with short hair can play longer in the heat than a long-coated dog not accustomed

to getting much exercise. The owner also must take into account the age of the dog and any health problems it might have. Very young or very old dogs are more at risk. Breeds like pugs and Pekinese have more difficulty in the heat because of their facial shape."

Fortney says that many dogs don't know when to quit exercising. They love playing Frisbee, or fetch, so much that they will continue to the point of exhaustion. It is up to the owner to use good judgment and decide when play should stop.

"I discourage that kind of activity in the heat of the day anyway," Fortney said. "Wait until the evening when it is cooler."

The first signs of heat exhaustion:

- * Excessive panting
- * The skin on the inside of the ears becomes flushed and red

Fortney says heat exhaustion quickly deteriorates into heat stroke, with signs of:

- * Weakness
- * Walk becomes wobbly
- * Fainting/loss of consciousness

Hot Summer Temperatures Coupled with High Humidity can Overheat Dogs

Because of the way dogs cool themselves, they are more susceptible to heat exhaustion than humans. Below are some steps for the identification and treatment of heat exhaustion.

Symptoms of heat exhaustion:

- * Heavy panting
- * Dog begins huffing and puffing or gasping for air
- * Dog begins to weave when it walks/acts dizzy

- * Dog lays down or collapses and can't get up
- * Dog becomes unconscious

Depending on the seriousness of the situation, these are the steps an owner should take if your dog is suffering from heat exhaustion:

1. Move the dog out of the sun and into the shade or into an air-conditioned building.
2. Give the dog water to drink.
3. Rinse the dog off either in the bath tub or with a garden hose.
4. Place the dog in front of a fan while it is still damp.
5. Place ice bags around the dog's head and neck.
6. Take the dog to the veterinarian only after the dog has been cooled down.