



HEAT STRESS in Dogs

Prevention of Heat Stress

Prevention of heat stress is of course far better than having affected animals.

1. Always ensure that your dogs have adequate shade and water. If the dog for some reason has to be left in a confined area ensure that:-

- (a) Ventilation is more than adequate.
- (b) Shade is available.
- (c) Water is always available.

2. Puppies, brachycephalic breeds and old dogs are especially susceptible to heat stress. If your dog falls into these categories, you should leave a wet towel or wet newspaper over part of their living area on very hot days. If you freeze a large dish of water, it can be left out to gradually melt during the day. Leave a sprinkler going over the shed if it can be managed or direct a fan over the animals to stir the air. If using a fan with puppies make sure it is directed over them and not down on them.

3. In hotter weather it is a good idea to give your dog electrolyte salts to help prevent heat stress. Electrolytes are very helpful, especially after several hot days. There are various brands available and they usually contain some glucose (eg. Staminade*, Recharge*). Give one level teaspoon for average to large breeds in their food the night before expected hot days. If using a liquid electrolyte eg. Lectade* use 10-15mls of the concentrate for the same size dog.

*** Put the electrolytes in the food as dogs do not like it in water.**

4. If travelling in hot weather, in addition to the electrolytes, always travel with plenty of water (preferably with frozen cool packs as well). If the dogs are at all distressed, wet them down and place them on wet towels. Dogs cool quickest through their feet, belly and anus. Hot air rises, so do not cover the dogs with wet towels.

5. More recently there are cool coats and cool mats that once wet, keep the dog cool. Great for dog shows and short outings. Must be careful as if the coats dry out, the dog will start to heat up rapidly ie. the coat must remain wet to be effective.

***Remember....**

1. In hot weather, ALWAYS ensure there is access to shade, good through ventilation and water at all times.

2. Heat stress can occur on a relatively mild day, especially if it has been very hot for the previous few days.

Brachycephalic Breeds in Hot Weather

Because all brachycephalic breeds have varying degrees of the predisposing anatomical features of airway obstruction, even if it is subclinical, it is appropriate to treat all brachycephalic breeds as having the potential for upper airway obstruction.

It is worth remembering that with the shorter face, the less the air will cool before it reaches the lungs.

Predisposing Risk Factors

Heat, humidity, exercise, excitement can all increase panting as the dog attempts to lose heat and cool itself. This excessive panting can in turn produce local swelling (oedema) and further airway narrowing, increasing anxiety and body temperature; creating a vicious cycle.

Treatment

If panting hard, cool the dog all over by hosing the dog down in a bath or a wading pool. Pay particular attention to the head, throat and belly. Do not attempt to make the dog swallow. Ice packs placed along the belly, under the throat will help cool the dog. Keep going for a minimum of 10-15 minutes or until the respiration rate slows down. If the dog is still having problems, get the dog to the veterinarian as soon as possible. Keep the car air conditioned, with the cold air aimed directly into the face of the dog.

Prevention

Be aware of the temperature on a daily basis, weather forecasting generally will give a good idea well ahead of hot weather. Place your dogs on extra electrolytes in their food as this can help them cope with the heat better. Keep your dogs in cool conditions with plenty of through ventilation. In extremely hot weather, the more affected dogs may need to be kept in an air conditioned area. Fans, wet towels on the floor, etc. can all be useful items to leave out on hot days.

Travelling

These breeds need plenty of air flow around their bodies, particularly in hot weather. If transporting by air, larger crates are needed.

**** Be very careful moving brachycephalic dogs from air conditioned areas (like a car) into direct heat, as the sudden large change in temperature can stress these dogs very quickly. If travelling in an air conditioned car, turn the air conditioning off a good 10-15 minutes prior to stopping and open the windows to equalise temperatures.**

