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Heat Exhaustion in Dogs

Summer always brings to mind things like vacations, picnics, boating on lakes and rivers, and children playing in the sun and swimming in the pool or at beaches. Many times the family dog is right there with them totally engaged in the activities. There is fun to be had for sure but there is also a lurking danger. Heat exhaustion!

Dogs love to get caught up with us in our summer fun. They live for these social activities and your companionship. Many times though they get so caught up that they surpass their own bodies ability to cool off and go into distress from heat exhaustion. At this time their bodies overheat past their capacity to cool themselves by panting. If this is let go unattended they can go from heat exhaustion to heat stroke which could be deadly. Recognizing the signs of heat exhaustion in your dog is critical to his well-being. Every dog is at risk for heat exhaustion. Some breeds that have “pushed in faces” such as Pugs, Pekinese and older pets are more sensitive. Even a simple walk around the block can have harmful effects.

WARNINGS SIGNS OF HEAT EXHAUSTION

When a dog is suffering heat exhaustion the first thing that you will notice is his tongue hanging out of his mouth to an unusual degree. His need to try to gasp for air and cool himself will cause his lips to pull back and expose his back molars. He will start to exhibit signs of stress which may show itself in pacing, circling, laying down and then getting right back up again, or a glazed over look in his eyes that denotes panic. He is panicking because his body is telling him that his temperature is rapidly rising to a point that he cannot cool himself.

CHECKING YOUR DOG’S TEMPERATURE

You should always have a thermometer on hand when you own a dog so that you can tell if your dog has an ailment that you should be concerned with and needs immediate action and attention. Rectal body temperature is the best indicator of wellness or distress in your dog. Normal temperature for a dog depending on age and outside temperature can range from 101 to 102.5. Temperatures should always be done rectally as ear and mouth thermometers are not accurate. If you don’t have a thermometer handy and there is a concern, take your pet immediately to your veterinarian. Temperatures that rise above these levels should be considered dangerous and immediate action and veterinary care are called for.

WHAT TO DO IF HEAT EXHAUSTION IS EXPECTED

Contact your veterinarian to get your dog there as soon as possible. In the mean time, because the dog’s temperature will go up quickly to over 104 to 105 get your dog cooled down as fast as possible. This involves getting the dog cooled down quickly while at the same time not shocking the dogs system. Before loading the dog into a potentially hot car and speeding off to the veterinarian immediate action should be taken. This is best done by putting cool (**NOT COLD**) water on his belly (not his back) which is where his vital organs are located. Get an ice pack or a zip lock bag with ice in it and apply it to his belly. Get him into the coolest spot you can find (air-conditioned room or if outside under a shade tree) and begin to work on getting his temperature down. When a dog has heat exhaustion he often will throw up his food, pant excessively, collapse or be immobile. Do not give him water right away as he will probably throw this up.

TIPS TO AVOID HEAT EXHAUSTION

Ideas for keeping your dog cool and safe in the summer are many:

- 1. Provide adequate availability of cool fresh water that is kept in shaded areas.*
- 2. Provide plenty of shade. Shade can be provided by overhead covers, trees, pop ups, solid fencing etc*
- 3. Never leave him in a hot car or contained area where he cannot get to shade. Do not expect a crate or a dog house to provide shade. These enclosures can actually hold heat if left in the sun.*
- 4. If the dog must work in the heat there are cooling pads, vests, and collars available on the market.*
- 5. Always keep a thermometer on hand to take the dogs temperature if necessary.*
- 6. Make sure you have ice packs in the freezer in case of emergency.*
- 7. If the area the dog is in is too hot for you it is too hot for your dog!*
- 8. If your dog is not allowed in the house at least put him in a crate and bring him into an air conditioned laundry room or other room of the house out of the heat.*
- 9. There are a number of items available to help cool yourself and your dog on the market. These include fans and mister systems that are easily installed and maintained.*
- 10. Walks should be done early in the morning or in the evening when it is cooler outside.*
- 11. Most important to the safety of the dog be AWARE of his condition and activity in the summer months.*

Here is a link to an ABC news report from June 7, 2011
about heat exhaustion in dogs.

<http://abclocal.go.com/wls/video?id=8176411>