

# Deadly Heat

## Keeping Pets Safe When Temperatures Soar

The summer months are obviously the hottest time of the year in Southwest Florida. As the temperature rises to extreme levels, most people find comfort by staying inside in air conditioning or by immersing themselves in water at the beach or the pool. Ensuring that our pets are able to maintain proper body temperature is extremely important as well. Keeping pets indoors with plenty of fresh water during the hottest times of the day is best. If your pets must remain outside, make sure they have access to water and shade at all times. Some pet owners have found that filling small children's pools with water for supervised outdoor play will help pets cool off.

### Fatal Mistakes:

No matter how warm the weather gets, it goes without saying- but I will still remind you-NEVER leave your pet on a parked car. According to reports from People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), even on mild days, when outdoor temperatures are 73 degrees F, the temperature inside a car can reach 120 degrees within 30 minutes. When temperatures are 90 degrees F or higher, it only takes MINUTES for the temperature inside a car to reach 160 degrees F.

### Avoiding Heat Stress:

Dogs and cats can suffer from heat stress, just like people do. Very young, very old, overweight and short-nosed pets are more susceptible. If your pet has had a previous history of cardiovascular or respiratory disorders, you will want to be extremely cautious, as well. Healthy pets can have severe reactions to long exposure in the heat or even to short exposure if they are exerting themselves during a walk or run. After dark, it

is still hot, and animals can overheat if they are too active, even at night. It is also not a good idea to take a dog on a run or jog with you in hot weather at any time of the day or night. Jogging is for people, not dogs, they are not equipped to sweat and let off excess heat the way people can.

### Telltale Symptoms:

Some of the symptoms of heat stress or heat stroke include profuse panting and salivations, staring or an anxious expression, failure to respond to commands, warm dry skin, high fever, rapid heartbeat, fatigue, muscular weakness, collapse and bloody diarrhea. If your pet is experiencing any of the symptoms of heat stroke, try to reduce the body temperature by gradually immersing the pet's body in cool water or applying ice packs to his head and neck. It is important to get your pet to a veterinarian immediately after applying the cool water and ice packs. Rapid treatment for shock, brain swelling and other side effects of heat stroke is needed to prevent death and give your pet a better chance of survival.

### Five Steps to Keep Pets Safe:

#### **To help prevent heat stress in pets:**

- ~Make sure animals have plenty of clean, fresh water at all times.
- ~Provide proper ventilation and air circulation for animals that are kept on kennels or pens.
- ~Always make sure your pen has shade cover when outdoors.
- ~Avoid excessive exercise during hot weather.
- ~Once again, NEVER leave your pets in parked vehicles.

Our pets depend on us and, in return, give us unconditional love, so do your best to keep them cool during the months when weather is the hottest.