



Tip Of The Tail

Heat Stroke

This time of year in Florida the heat can cause some very serious problems in our pets. Every year many pets suffer heat stroke from different causes. The most notable reasons might be from being left in a closed car or playing outside early to late afternoon when the sun and heat are at their peak. Did you realize that leaving your pet in a parked car even with the windows cracked open for just four to five minutes could result in a heatstroke causing death or permanent organ and brain damage?



Heat stroke or heat exhaustion is a life-threatening condition that requires *immediate* treatment. Once the signs of hyperthermia are noticed, there is a small window of opportunity before serious damage – or even death – can occur. Our pets don't sweat through their skin like humans do, they release heat primarily by panting and from small sweat glands in their foot pads and nose. If your pet is unable to expel the heat, their body's internal temperature rises. Temperatures above 104 require immediate action and above 106 is an extreme emergency because at this point the damage to the brain and organs may be irreversible. Let's learn how to recognize the signs of heat stroke and try to prevent it.

Signs Of Heat Stroke

- Hot skin, anxious or panic expression, rectal temperature above 104
- Excessive panting, drooling with thick saliva
- Rapid heart rate and dark red gums which may progress to muddy pink or bluish
- Vomiting or diarrhea which may be bloody
- Dizziness, disorientation, inability to follow commands
- Fatigue, collapse, seizure or coma

What To Do If You Suspect Heat Stroke

- Immediately move your pet out of the heat and begin to **slowly lower** your pet's temperature with a cool water bath or soak by placing cool wet rags around the neck, foot pads and also between the back legs and underarms.
- **Do not** use ice or very cold water (this extreme

temperature change will cause blood vessels to constrict resulting in shivering and increased core body temperature and brain swelling.)

- Offer your dog cool water to drink.
- **Immediately call or visit your veterinarian.** Serious complications may not show up right away.
- Stop all cooling when the pet's temperature reaches 103 degrees so it does not drop too low.

Heatstroke Prevention

- Limit exposure and activity during the hottest part of the day.
- Always provide plenty of shade and fresh cool water.
- **Never leave a pet unattended in a vehicle, period.**
- Certain body types and breeds are more sensitive to heat and require extreme care when exposed to higher temperatures – these include pets that are obese, very young or old, and those pets with preexisting heart or lung problems. The brachycephalic (short nose) breeds are known to be the ineffectual breathers – such as **pugs, bulldogs and boxers**. Also, let's not forget the longer, thicker coat breeds like the **huskies or Pekinese**.

Some dogs may recover fully from a heat stroke if it's caught early enough, but sadly, many do not survive or suffer permanent organ damage and require long term care.

Prevention is the key.

Established in 1981, Palm City Animal Clinic is dedicated to providing the best possible care for your pets. With focuses on compassionate care in surgery, physical therapy and rehabilitation, preventative medicine, extensive diagnostics and emergency service, Palm City Animal Clinic combines exceptional medical care with a caring philosophy for pets and their owners. For more information, call (772) 283-0920, visit www.palmcityanimalclinic.com or find us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/PalmCityAnimalClinic.

