

# Hot Weather & Dogs - Summer Advice

Summer is here and as the temperature rises it brings it with some fun, more time spent outdoors, time off work and six weeks of glorious school holidays for many.

Dogs, like people can suffer in the hot weather; following a few simple rules can help keep your dog a lot happier as the temperatures soar.



Understanding how your dog cools down and planning ahead can help stop dangerous situations from escalating and avoid potential disasters.

Every year dogs tragically die in hot vehicles or end up in the vets with sunburn or heatstroke. Enjoy the hot weather and have a great time but please don't let your dog down this summer.

## **How Dogs Regulate Their Body Temperature:**

Dogs are endothermic; regardless of changes in environmental temperatures, they need to maintain and regulate their own body temperature within a set and safe range. The average healthy dog's body temperature is 101.5 °F / 38.6 °C.

When your dog's body temperature increases, heat is lost from increased blood flowing at the skin surface. As a dog breathes in, air travels through the nasal passage and is cooled before it reaches the lungs (less so in short nosed dogs).

As the environment becomes warmer and/or more humid a dog will regulate body temperature and cool down using the respiratory system - mainly by panting, unlike us humans who sweat when we're hot, dogs do not use sweating through their skin as their cooling mechanism.

**A Panting Dog Is A Hot Dog:** When your dog becomes hot the brain will send signals to different parts of the dog's body. Your dog's heart and lungs will work harder as your dog breathes in and out quicker and pants to reduce body temperature via the process of evaporation.

As a dog is panting, the mouth is open and the tongue is hanging out - breathing air in through the nose and out through the mouth, air passes over the tongue, saliva and moisture on the tongue evaporates, the blood in the tongue is cooled and circulated around the body.

## **Owners of Brachycephalic Dogs:**

Short nosed/push in face/flat face/snub nose dogs are technically known as 'Brachycephalic' dogs and include breeds such as the British Bulldog, Boxer, French Bulldog, Pekingese, Pug as well as crossbreeds. These dogs need special care in hot weather as they can overheat quickly and this can be fatal.

Brachycephalic dogs have short noses so air being breathed in doesn't cool so well before it reaches the lungs. They also rely on panting but have to work a lot harder at it as they are not, by design, very efficient. Less air is passing in due to shorter muzzle length and out due

to the flat shape of their heads and these types of dogs can quickly become over heated and in trouble.

When a brachycephalic dog is too hot and panting, a foamy phlegm can be produced in the throat making it harder to breath, airways can become inflamed and swollen leading to further difficulties breathing and distress.

If you are the owner of a brachycephalic dog you will need to be extra careful in hot and humid weather and work to help prevent your dog from overheating.

### **Dogs DIE in Hot Vehicles:**

Cars and other vehicles **quickly become ovens** in warm weather and kill dogs, end of story. Some people leave their dog in a car whilst they just 'pop into a shop' or think it's alright as it's cloudy out - this is a big mistake to make and one which could result in the death of your dog.

Leaving water down in a vehicle or the window open is not going to stop your dog from overheating as dogs regulate their body temperature in a different way to us. Many dogs still tragically suffer heatstroke or DIE in hot cars every year.

***Please never leave a dog in a vehicle on a warm day  
Or risk killing your dog in a most horrendous way.***

### **Travelling:**

If you're going to be making a road journey, first of all - do you really need to take your dog along?

If so, do you have a good working air conditioning system inside your vehicle? If not, or if your air con broke down, how are you going to keep your dog cool during the journey?

If it's possible, travelling during the cooler parts of the day is sensible and a lot safer. Much better to travel early morning or later in the evening when it's cooler. It's horrible to be stuck in a traffic jam with a dog on a hot day, e.g. a motorway hold up could last for several hours, so if you're caught in it, with no air con, how are you going to stop your dog from overheating? Much better to plan ahead and avoid these stressful situations in the first place.

If you have air con - cool the vehicle down before you get in it. Always take plenty of water and a bowl, take frequent breaks and park in the shade, during the breaks leave open windows and doors to help reduce the humidity inside the vehicle and keep your dog out of the sun.

Think ahead and organise some appropriate shade for the windows to help screen out some of the sunlight during the journey - a dog sat in the back of a car with the full sun coming in through the windows can quickly overheat whilst you are driving, this can be a very dangerous position for a dog to be in.

Be careful that your dog can't jump out of an open vehicle window and don't let him stick his head out as you're driving - this is very dangerous, for example a small stone could take his eye out, the side mirror of a passing car could hit his head.

Plan ahead to where you are going with your dog - for example if you have planned a family day out during the summer, is your dog allowed access to where you are going? If you are

going out, will there be enough shade and water for your dog at all times when you get there?

### **Shade & Ventilation:**

We all spend more time in our gardens and outside during the summer months and it's easy for your dog to overheat in no time at all. Your dog will need plenty of shade if outside on a warm day.

Remember that the sun moves round throughout the day, so an area can be shaded and then exposed, check out that your dog has constant access to a well shaded area at all times of the day. Shaded areas also need to be well ventilated - with a good circulation of fresh air.

Some dogs will lie out in the sun, if your dog is a sunbather, you will need to prevent this as dogs quickly overheat and can also be burnt by the sun. Dogs are far better suited to staying indoors when it's very hot out, in a ventilated cool area.

Drawn blinds/curtains etc can help keep a room cooler by blocking out the powerful sun's rays. An electric fan safely positioned can also help circulate air around; place a bowl of cold water with some ice cubes in it below the fan, this will circulate cooler air around the room. Lying on a tiled or lino floor covering can also be cooler for your dog.

Conservatories or rooms with a lot of glass can heat up very quickly as the sun moves around during the day, so keep this in mind.

If you are leaving windows/doors open to allow air to circulate more freely do consider that it is safe to do so, for example, that your dog cannot escape through a door, jump or fall out of an open window.

### **Water – the Life Saver:**

Dogs need a constant supply of fresh, cool (not baked in the sun hot) drinking water.

Bowls can get knocked over or played with and spilt. Before you know it your dog is dehydrating and in distress, so make sure there is plenty of water down at all times, both indoors and outside. Don't force your dog to drink; it will drink when it wants to.

Paddling/shallow pools can help a dog to cool down and many dogs enjoy access to one. Don't leave a dog with access to a pool unsupervised and make sure the dog can get out of the pool easily.

Rivers, canals and ponds etc can be very attractive to some, but not all, dogs who love to swim, they can also cause drowning and disease so do be careful and supervise your dog at all times when out.

### **Exercising - Mad dogs and Englishmen - Go out in the midday sun:**

Many dogs will still run and play in the sun if allowed to - many just don't know when to stop, but that's your job. A dog can suffer from heatstroke due to physical activity on a warm, hot or humid day-this doesn't always have to be in the mid summer season.

Puppies get can get very excited and play regardless of the heat, some dogs, say a Staffordshire Bull Terrier having a great time with a ball, will keep enthusiastically playing

until they become exhausted. As a dog owner it is up to you to supervise and limit physical activity in hot and humid conditions - your dog will thank you for it.

It makes sense to avoid the hottest parts of the day (10am-4pm) and exercise your dog early mornings and later in the evenings when it's naturally cooler. Dogs don't need to go walks in the midday sun, this really is madness and every year leaves a lot of dogs gasping to breathe and in some cases down at the vets.

Many people want to get and about during the summer, enjoying long walks, cycling, jogging, time off work, it's nice for us, but often you will see someone walking down the road in the heat of the day with a dog alongside panting away and struggling to keep up.

We might find it enjoyable (some of us) but your dog really shouldn't be out as Noel Coward said; "Mad dogs and Englishmen...". This is very true and experienced dog owners know to protect their dogs during the hottest parts of the day.

If you do need to take your dog out during the warmer parts of the day, for example you have no garden and your dog must get out to toilet, try to walk in shaded areas avoiding open spaces and hot pavements as much as possible and take water with you.

### **Coat types and condition:**

Black dogs will absorb more heat from the sun. Long haired dogs and dogs with double coats need to be kept well groomed to maintain the coat free of tangles and remove any dead undercoat; this helps the air to circulate which allows the skin to breathe and helps your dog keep cooler.

Some owners like to shave their heavy coated dog's abdomen and groin as this helps air to flow and disperses heat, dogs enjoy stretching out flat on a cool surface too.

Long coated dogs, e.g. Shih Tzu's can be trimmed back to help make them more comfortable-speak to a professional groomer about this.

Dogs don't need to have their hair completely shaved off during the warmer weather as this will expose the skin underneath to the sun and some coat covering helps to provide protection.

The area around your dog's bottom needs to be kept especially clean during the summer as flies can be attracted here if faeces has been lodged in the coat.

### **Older Dogs & Overweight Dogs:**

Older dogs and dogs which are overweight need extra care in the hot weather as they can overheat a lot quicker and may be less tolerant to the heat and less able to regulate their body temperature.

Be extra vigilant and provide a shady, quiet resting space which is well ventilated with access to fresh cool water.

Dogs with weakened heart and lung function will also need extra help to stay cool in hot weather. If you're at all concerned have a chat with your vet.

### **Muzzled Dogs:**

Some dogs wear a muzzle when they go out as their owner has decided this is a responsible option for different reasons. Some dogs have to wear a muzzle at all times in a public place due the requirements of a control order or due to legislation.

It may be the case that you as the person responsible for a dog, cannot remove a muzzle to enable a dog to drink or pant easier without committing a criminal offence, if this is the situation, you will need to take extra precautions particularly in hot weather to safeguard the welfare of your dog.

Dogs registered on the Index of Exempted Dogs also have to be muzzled and leashed when travelling inside a vehicle. It can quickly become hot and humid inside a vehicle on a warm day, owners will need to take precautions and be extra careful when transporting a registered dog, as legally they are not allowed to remove the muzzle whilst the vehicle is itself in a public place (eg, on the road). Tip: If you get your dog used to taking water from a squeezey bottle-you can take one with you to use when out.

A muzzle which is of a design (e.g. basket type) that does not prevent your dog from opening its mouth to pant and drink is going to be very important. If a dog is unable to open its mouth to drink water and pant it cannot cool itself down - on a warm day, this could quickly lead to a distressed dog, heatstroke and a veterinary emergency.

### **Tarmac & Pavements:**

Tarmac surfaces and pavements get hot! We don't notice with our footwear on, but our dogs do and paws can get burnt.

Walking surfaces can also take a while to cool back down again so bear that in mind if you are taking your dog out in the evening.

### **Sunburn & Dehydration:**

Like us, dogs can also suffer from sunburn. White dogs are particularly prone to sunburn due to a lack of pigmentation in their skin. For example white American Bulldogs and Bull Terriers.

The tips of the ears, bridge of the nose, round the eyes and abdomen are areas which can become burnt easily due to the thin skin and not much hair covering in these sensitive areas.

High factor waterproof sunscreen or complete sunblock can be applied, this will provide protection for vulnerable areas, but prevention is a must and keeping in the shade is a priority.

Use a cream which is fragrance free and suitable for a child as your dog may lick the cream off - especially when applied to his nose. If you're using a spray be careful around the eyes - spray it onto your fingers first and wipe it on gently. You can now buy sunblock cream especially produced for dogs and pets.

Like us, dog can also become dehydrated due to a lack of fluid intake and loss of saliva when panting. Making sure your dog has constant access to plenty of fresh water will help prevent dehydration.

Signs of dehydration in a dog include a dry mouth, gums and nose, reduced skin elasticity, reduced capillary refill and sunken eyes.

If you suspect your dog is dehydrated offer your dog water in small amounts to prevent vomiting and seek veterinary advice immediately. Your vet will be able to advise further as sometimes dogs become dehydrated due to other causes and a severely dehydrated dog will need hydration therapy which will include not only fluids but electrolytes.

Dehydration can come on quickly and cause damage to internal organs so always seek veterinary advice.

### **Overheating & Heatstroke:**

Dogs can quickly become too hot and reach a point of where their body temperature is too high and they are unable to cool themselves down and keep their body temperature within a SAFE margin.

Heatstroke can be caused by overexposure to sunlight (sunstroke) and hot and humid environments.

Your dog will need appropriate first aid to bring the body temperature down and immediate veterinary attention.

Heatstroke is a medical emergency, it can be fatal and it can also cause damage to internal organs.

### **Signs of Heatstroke in a dog include:**

A raised body temperature, heavy and rapid panting, laboured breathing, weakness, wide eyes, red tongue, rapid pulse, disorientation, exhaustion, diarrhoea, vomiting and distress. A dog can also collapse and go into a coma.

A dog with a body temperature between 104 °F to 106 °F is suffering from moderate heatstroke; first aid and veterinary advice is needed straight away.

If the dog's body temperature is 106 °F or over the dog is said to have severe heatstroke; first aid and immediate veterinary attention is critical.

Heatstroke and sunstroke can damage internal organs and be fatal. You need to act quickly and seek veterinary help as this is an emergency for your dog.

### **How to cool a dog down - First Aid:**

The average temperature for a healthy dog is 101.5 °F or 38.6 °C. A healthy dog's temperature can vary from 100.5 °F to 102.5 °F (38 °C – 39.2 °C).

If a dog has/is overheating and it is unable to bring down its own temperature through panting it is going to need your help. A dog's body temperature must be cooled down safely.

- Move the dog into the shade if out in the sun, move into a well ventilated (fresh air flow) area where it is cool.
- Offer cool water but don't force the dog to drink

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- Soak the dog in cool water. Freezing water will cause blood vessels to constrict so use cool water not freezing cold water and wet down your dog's body all over making sure the water isn't just running off the coat but is soaking right through to the skin. Turning a hose on a dog may frighten him, so try to quickly soak him instead.
- Standing a dog in a paddling pool or shallow bath of cool water will cool him down, wet him all over, soaking the back of his neck will help cool down the blood going to his brain, but if he can't stand let him lie and soak him through whilst he lays down.
- If you are out and limited on water, soak cold water on your dog's belly, in his groin and round his neck, this will help cool the hot blood running through larger blood vessels. Get him out the sun and in the shade. Offer water to drink.
- Short muzzled dogs may have a build up of foamy type phlegm in their throat-a short squirt of Jiff Lemon to the back of the throat may help cut through this, not nice, but if the dog can't breathe this is an emergency.
- If possible point an electric fan his way to aid cooling.
- Stay calm and talk to your dog.
- If you have access to the phone ring through to the vet immediately and seek advice on what to do next or send an adult for help.
- Keep the dog soaked in cool water, in the shade with plenty of fresh air and check his rectal temperature every ten minutes if you can, write it down with the time taken and tell your vet.
- Remember not to over cool your dog, you're trying to bring his rectal temperature back down-stop cooling at 103°F (39.4°C) Check the temperature - you don't want his body temperature dropping too low-hypothermia.
- When travelling to the vets with an overheated dog, soak towels in cold water and lay or sit your dog on a cold towel. Cool the vehicle down first before you get in it. Allow plenty of air to circulate inside the vehicle on the way to the vets - this aids evaporation. Take cold water with you for your dog to drink.
- If you have managed to cool down your dog, still contact your veterinary clinic for advice.

***Remember - Prevention Really Is Better Than Cure.***



### **Hot Weather and Temperament:**

People can become irritable when they get too hot, so is it any surprise that dogs may also feel hot and bothered as well?

During the summer, the children are off school for six weeks, there is often increased activity in the home, the sun is out, children are out playing, the temperature is rising, the routine may have changed and some dogs can become overheated, more sensitive and maybe less tolerant than usual... A hot dog can understandably feel quite stressed out.

A recent study which analysed 84 cases of dog bites in children showed that young children are at the greatest risk for dog bites in the summer.

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If a dog has been walked through the hottest part of day, allowed to get overexcited and/or overheated in the sun, can't get cooled down, can't relax as the garden is full of children all happily playing away and enjoying themselves, it is any surprise really that more people are bitten during hot weather as some dogs are being left with a lot to cope with?

During the summer months please don't forget your dog's needs. Don't let him overheat and/or become overexcited playing outside or indoors and always make sure that children and dogs are supervised by a responsible adult at all times.

Keep your dog cool, calm and relaxed during hot weather. Just following a few simple tips can help keep everyone happy in the heat and prevent situations from escalating.

### **Taking Your Dog's Temperature:**

You will need either a digital or mercury thermometer for rectal use; they can be glass or plastic. A plastic thermometer with a digital readout is easier to use, it needs to be waterproof for cleaning easily afterwards. Keep your dog's thermometer separate to the one used for humans and don't swap them over or mix them up.

A dog's temperature is taken by inserting the end of a thermometer into the rectum (anus) if done properly this will give an accurate reading of core body temperature.

You will also need a lubricant, Vaseline or KY jelly will work fine and disinfectant to clean the thermometer after use. Also some tasty treats for your dog.

When taking the temperature it may be easier if you have the dog focused on a treat or a person at the head end (depending on the physical condition of your dog). Another person holding the dog at the front is helpful. Your dog may be standing (in which case be careful he doesn't sit down on the thermometer) or lying down - especially if he has overheated.

If using a mercury thermometer shake the reading (the level of mercury) down first, apply some lubricant to the end of the thermometer and gently move the tail to one side, don't pull the tail up in the air. Gently and slowly insert the tip (one inch for a small dog, two to three inches for a large dog) of the thermometer into your dog's rectum, insert without force.

Hold the other end of the thermometer and wait until the digital thermometer beeps and then remove and read, if using a mercury one, keep in for two minutes, remove, wipe, read and record straight away. Praise your dog. Wash and disinfect the thermometer after use and wash your hands afterwards.

**Tip:** If you take your dog's temperature when he is well, you'll be more familiar with what to do should an emergency ever arise.

Normal healthy adult dog temperature range is 100.5 °F - 102.5 °F / 38.0 °C - 39.2 °C  
If the temperature is higher or lower contact your vet for advice.

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For further advice - please contact us:

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