

## Summer heat means time to keep an eye on pets for signs of heat stress, dehydration

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With high temperatures scorching much of the country, a Kansas State University veterinarian is reminding pet owners that dogs, with that layer of fur, are susceptible to the heat.

As the summer [heat](#) index rises, the risk for dehydrated and overheated [dogs](#) does the same, said Susan Nelson, clinical professor at the university's Veterinary Health Center. Nelson said it's important to recognize the signs of heatstroke in your pet and know what you can do to prevent it from becoming a problem.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, when temperatures outside range from 80 to 100 degrees, the temperature inside a car parked in direct sunlight can quickly climb to between 130 to 172 degrees. That means it's best to leave pets at home when running errands, Nelson said.

"Even with the windows cracked, we should never leave our pets in a vehicle unattended," Nelson said. "For what might seem like a short trip into the bank, it can end up being fatal for our pets."

To prevent heatstroke in your pets, Nelson said to keep in mind the time of day you take them outside for walks or runs. She recommends taking them out in the cooler morning or later evening hours.

"Even if they have never had a problem with heat before, watch for signs of lagging behind, thick saliva and dark mucus membranes," Nelson said. These are all indications your dog might be starting to get [heat stress](#)."

The following are some of the symptoms Nelson said to watch for when trying to detect heatstroke in your dog:

- Body temperature above 103 degrees.
- Excessive or vigorous panting.
- Dark red, blue or purple gums.
- Thick saliva and excessive drooling.
- Dizziness or disorientation.

- Restlessness or appearing distressed.
- Rapid heart rate or irregular heartbeat.
- Vomiting or urinating blood, or traces of blood in bowel movements.
- Seizures and muscle tremors.
- Lying down and unwilling or unable to get up.
- Collapse or loss of consciousness where the animal cannot be awakened.

If you think your dog is starting to become overheated, move it to a shaded area and offer cool water to drink until the dog has cooled down, Nelson said. If your dog is showing signs of more advanced heat stress, wet it down with [cool water](#)—not ice water—and place the dog in front of a fan. If its condition does not change, run the air conditioning in your car and get the dog to a veterinarian for further treatment immediately, as every second counts, she said.

Dehydration also can be a problem with pets on hot summer days. Nelson said signs of severe dehydration, especially in dogs, include the appearance of sunken eyes, gums feeling dry and tacky, and overall weakness in the animal. Dogs pant to cool down, and they tend to pant frequently when overheated and tired, she said.

"When the air goes by, they dissipate the heat by breathing this way, but this also means it is easier for them to dehydrate more quickly when they're panting a lot," Nelson said.

Nelson also recommends that outdoor dogs and cats have access to plenty of fresh, clean water. Water bowls should be checked and filled as needed several times per day during hot weather. Food should be changed a minimum of twice daily, as it spoils quickly in [warm weather](#) and flies are attracted to food that is left out, she said. If left outside, your pets should have access to shade any time of the day, so be sure to

check periodically throughout the day to ensure shade is available. If you don't have any trees, etc., you can hang a tarp to create shade for them.

Provided by Kansas State University

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