

# Heat wave means pet precautions

21 December 2012



With Christmas temperatures forecast to rise above 35 degrees, Murdoch University Veterinary Hospital is reminding people to be mindful of heat stroke in pets.

Dr Lisa Smart of Murdoch Pet Emergency Centre (MPEC) said pets had similar needs to their human companions on hot days.

"Our furry friends are at risk of developing [heat stroke](#) when temperatures spike, especially this early in the season when their bodies haven't had a chance to acclimatise," Dr Smart said.

"The key is to keep the [core body temperature](#) down by wetting the skin, getting into the shade or cooling down in air conditioning. [Dogs](#) don't sweat, so giving them a paddle pool with water can really help."

Dr Smart said older dogs, puppies and breeds with short snouts such as pugs, bulldogs and boxers were most susceptible to heat. Extremely active and playful dogs were at risk, as they can overexert themselves.

"You can't assume dogs will stop playing when they feel hot. Often they'll want to please you and

will play or run until they suddenly collapse from heat stroke," she said.

"In [hot weather](#), the only suitable times to play are early in the morning and evenings, preferably when the temperatures are below 32 degrees. And remember, if you're going to the park or beach, bring a bowl and fresh water along."

Dr Smart said heat stroke cases brought to MPEC often involved pets who had been left in cars – even for only a few minutes – as well as those without access to shade.

She said this included dogs tied up in backyards who had become exposed when the sun shifted in the sky, as well as dogs in the back of utes. Dogs in utes were also at risk for burns from metal heating up.

Signs of heat stroke include excessive panting, bright red gums and skin, vomiting, [diarrhoea](#), collapse, [loss of consciousness](#) and seizures.

If you do think your dog may have heat stroke, they need immediate [veterinary care](#).

Dr Smart advises people to soak their dog with water before loading them into the car to the vet and to keep the car air conditioner on high during the trip. She said to never cover your pet with wet towels, as these can act as insulation and prevent cooling.

Provided by Murdoch University

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