

Dogs Die in Hot Cars

Did you know that a dog left unattended in a car on a sunny day can suffer heat stress and ultimately a fatal heat stroke in less than 10 minutes?

The temperature inside a stationary vehicle can quickly rise to double that of the temperature on the outside. This can happen within 6 – 10 minutes (depending on the weather conditions).

A dog left inside a warm car will quickly begin to suffer heat stroke, and can die an agonising death. Dogs left in cars in warm weather can literally cook to death. The sun does not have to be shining, even on a cloudy warm day the temperature inside a car can rise at alarming rate.

- ❁ Even if you park your car in the shade, the position of the sun will change
- ❁ Even a little sun can turn a car into an oven with temperatures in excess of 50°C (122°F)
- ❁ Dogs only have sweat glands on the soles of their feet, and up to 90% of their body is covered with hair. Panting and salivating cause dogs to lose huge amounts of fluid, they rapidly become dehydrated.
- ❁ Very young and old animals are more susceptible to heat

Leaving windows open, leaving a bowl of water, parking in the shade of a tree are not enough. There is no safe way to leave a dog in a car in warm weather.

Try it for yourself:

You will find yourself sitting in a car which quickly begins to feel like a sauna. See how long it takes for you to find it unbearably hot. Then remember that your dog wears a furry coat, a coat designed to trap heat. Also remember your dog cannot sweat and can only regulate their heat by panting. Now repeat this experiment wearing woolly socks, a hat, scarf, gloves and a thick coat.

Don't fancy that? No, me neither. Perhaps you now have an idea as to why dogs will suffer heat stroke so quickly.

Never leave your dog unattended in a car on a warm day, not even for a short time.

Symptoms of heatstroke:

Rapid breathing, dry nose and mouth. Obvious agitation, possibly barking and/or whining, excessive panting. Breathing becoming more laboured, large amounts of drool/saliva. Gums changing colour from a healthy pink to a deep red. Eyes may appear 'glassy'.

Past this stage, the dogs body temperature may have reached critical with collapse, seizures, coma and death potentially only a few minutes away.

If identified early enough heat stroke can be reversed by cooling the dog down (in a very controlled manner). However once the critical temperature is reached,

the dog may go into shock and start to lose consciousness; by this time it could be too late to save the dogs life.

If a dog becomes overheated, seek veterinary advice immediately. You can lower a dogs temperature by providing water to drink, applying a cold towel to the head and body, or by immersing (or showering) the dog with cool/tepid (not cold) water.

A dog's normal body temperature is generally 100.5-102.5 °F (38-39 °C).

Keeping your dog safe and cool in warm weather

- ❁ Do not exert your dog on hot days. Ensure that all walks are taken very early or very late in the day.
- ❁ ALWAYS make sure your dog has immediate ready access to plentiful drinking water. You could even add a few ice cubes.
- ❁ Dogs can suffer from sunburn, especially those with little hair and with pale exposed skin. It is possible to use a human sunblock on exposed areas. However, the precaution is to limit your dog's exposure to full sun and to keep them in the shade.
- ❁ Keep a fan working all hours in the place where your dog likes to lie down to help cool the air temperature.
- ❁ If possible, put a shallow paddling pool in a shady part of the garden where your dog can cool its paws or even lie down to help it keep cool.
- ❁ A good alternative if a paddling pool is not an option, is to dip or bathe your dog's paws with cool (not iced) water. Keeping the paws slightly damp can help your dog lose heat more efficiently.
- ❁ Soak a small towel/tea towel in cold water, wring out and place over your dog.
- ❁ Use a plant water mister to spray over your dog, or even shower your dog and towel dry – leaving the dog damp.
- ❁ Make your own dog-ice-lollies:
Fill yoghurt pot/small bowl half full with some of your dogs favourite food, eg. pieces of sausage, cheese, ham, tuna, apple, vegetables, dried dog food or biscuit maybe a even little fruit juice – fill up with water and freeze. Turn out the 'lolly' into the dogs bowl.

