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Heatstroke

Heatstroke is a potentially fatal condition characterized by extremely high body temperatures. It results from exposure to high environmental temperatures. Heatstroke often occurs in animals that are left in an automobile, housed in the sun without sufficient shade or water, or going for walks and hikes in the sun.

Dogs and cats pant to lower their body temperature. Heat is lost through the evaporation of moisture from the tongue excessive evaporation can cause an animal to become very dehydrated. High humidity allows for moisture to evaporate slowly from the panting animals tongue. The animal cannot cool itself effectively and the body temperature rises. Other factors that may increase the possibility of heat stroke are: heart disease, poor circulation, obesity and lack of water. Pets with long or thick coats and some breeds are more at risk.

Signs of heatstroke include: panting, restlessness, bright red gums, a rapid heart beat, deep red or purple tongue, unsteadiness, glazed eyes, staggering gait and a temperature over 103 F. Vomiting and diarrhea may also occur. If allowed to progress, the animal may have convulsions and/or go into a coma. The animal may stop breathing and die.

To treat heatstroke you must improve circulation while lowering the animal's body temperature slowly. Oxygen and intravenous fluids are administered. Medication may be given to treat shock and to decrease swelling of the brain. Antibiotics may be given to guard against secondary bacterial infections. Once the animal is stabilized certain tests may need to be performed to evaluate their kidney and liver function and the bloods clotting abilities.

If your pet should suffer from Heatstroke, ***contact your Veterinarian immediately*** to evaluate the severity of your pet's condition. "Do's" and "don'ts" are recapped below:

Do:

- 1.) Take a rectal temperature (normal in most pets is 100 to 102.5 degrees F)
- 2.) **GRADUALLY** cool the animal, monitoring the temperature every 15 minutes (cooling too quickly may cause shock or death).
- 3.) Place a wet towel on the animal to help bring the temperature down.
- 4.) Place a fan on the animal.
- 5.) Mist the animal using a spray bottle with room temperature/cool water.
- 6.) Rub **water** on footpads, groin area and ears.
- 7.) Give gradual small amounts of cool water to drink, unless vomiting is present.

Don't:

- 1.) Don't submerge the animal in tub or pool.
- 2.) Don't hose down the animal.
- 3.) Don't use ice, ice packs or rubbing alcohol.
- 4.) Don't allow the animal to drink large amounts of water (this may cause vomiting and bloat).
- 5.) Don't bring the temperature down too quickly. To avoid hypothermia, stop all cooling measures after the temperature reaches 103 degrees F.