



## **Hot cars can kill pets too!**

Please remember that it is NEVER ok to leave a dog (or any animal) unattended in a car, at any time of the year. It only takes SIX minutes for a dog to die in a hot car. Keeping windows down an inch or just enough to fit the head of a dog out the window will not enable your dog to regulate their body temperature. Even cars in the shade get very hot quite quickly, and winter is no exception. Anyone that has been a passenger in the back seat of a car during summer will know that it can get uncomfortably hot if you don't have the aircon blasting over your face. Imagine putting your dog even further away from the aircon and leaving them in the boot! If you can remember how hot and uncomfortable it can be with the aircon switched on, imagine having the car turned off and only the windows down slightly. Follow this link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JbOcCQ-y3OY> to see veterinarian Dr Ward demonstrate just how hot in can get in a parked car.

### **Heat stress can be fatal**

It is important to remember that dogs don't sweat like we do. Dogs only have a few sweat glands around their paw pads and nose, and instead regulate their body temperature by releasing heat through panting. When a dog (or any other animal) is unable to cool themselves effectively, their internal body temperature rises and this elevation in temperature is termed hyperthermia.

Obese animals and brachycephalic breeds (dogs with short snouts including Pugs, French Bulldogs, Boston Terriers) are at a greater risk of overheating and can often develop breathing difficulties. While cats don't tend to take as many road trips as dogs, it doesn't mean they don't take any at all. The normal breathing rhythm of a cat should be smooth and unlaboured. If you notice a cat breathing hard with their mouth open or panting, this is often a sign that they are extremely hot, stressed or have an underlying disease process.

Any animal is susceptible to heat stress and/or stroke, whether it be:

- Left in a hot car for a prolonged period of time
- Left confined and without accessible water and/or shade (eg. Tethered to a post)
- Left in a space with minimal to no ventilation (eg. Shed)

**There are three different phases of hyperthermia, and for the purpose of this blog, signs that you may expect to see in a dog are highlighted below.**

### **1. Heat Stress**

A dog in heat stress may show signs of panting and an increase in thirst.

### **2. Heat Exhaustion**

Heat stress can progress to heat exhaustion, with signs including heavy panting, weakness and collapsing.

### **3. Heat Stroke**

Without treatment, heat exhaustion will most likely progress to heat stroke, which is a very serious condition that can result in death following organ failure (liver, kidneys, lungs, heart and brain can shut down). Signs of heat stroke may include drooling, disorientation, collapse, bright red or pale gums, vomiting and/or diarrhoea, muscle tremors, and seizures.

### **What to do if you suspect an animal is in heat stress**

- Immediately move the animal to a cool area (shaded area).
- Offer water, don't force them to drink it.
- Begin to reduce their body temperature by wetting their body with cool (not cold) water with a hose (gentle pressure) or bucket (don't wet the face), or towel covered ice packs over the back of their neck, under their armpits, groin region and pads of the feet. This is to prevent further organ damage.
- Place them in front of a fan.
- Contact your vet as soon as possible as heat stress can be life threatening.
- **DO NOT** place your pet in iced water as this can have contradicting effects.
- Placing wet towels over the body can trap heat that is trying to escape therefore it is not recommended.

### **Further reading and references:**

<https://blog.animalemergencyservice.com.au/heat-stress-in-dogs>

<https://vcahospitals.com/know-your-pet/heat-stroke-in-dogs>

<https://www.sydneyvetspecialists.com.au/signs-of-heat-stroke-in-dogs/>

<https://www.pethealthnetwork.com/cat-health/cat-diseases-conditions-a-z/can-cats-get-heat-stroke>