

HEAT RELATED ISSUES IN FIELD DOGS

By Camie Barrow

Hyperthermia or heat stroke occurs when a dog's internal temperature overcomes the dog's natural ability to dissipate the heat. A dog's normal temperature is typically 101.5°F to 102.5°F. When a dog's body temperature reaches 105.8°F permanent injury or death can result. **THE DEGREE OF DAMAGE CAUSED BY HEAT STROKE IS DETERMINED BY HOW HIGH THE CORE BODY TEMPERATURE IS AND FOR HOW LONG.**

ENVIRONMENTAL/WEATHER RISK FACTORS

BEFORE going out into the field decide how to handle tricky trial situations and/or how to adapt the training plan based on the presence of the environmental risk factors below.

Temperature:	When the outside temperature between 75°F and 80°F there is an elevated risk of heat related issues. When the temperature reaches 86°F and above dogs aren't able to cool themselves efficiently. (See the appendix).
Humidity:	Extra environmental moisture, like humid air and wet fields reduce a dog's ability to regulate their temperature.
Air movement:	Static air puts dogs at a greater risk of heat related illnesses.
Field Cover:	The thicker the cover, the harder a dog has to work and the hotter they will get.

SIGNS OF HEAT RELATED ILLNESS IN DOGS

Some of the most common signs of heat related issues that we see in the field are below:

WATCH FOR SIGNS OF HEAT EXHAUSTION

Watch the tongue	As the dog gets hotter, the tongue hangs further out of the mouth in an effort to expel more heat.
Watch the gait	A dog in danger will start missing steps and become uncoordinated.
Watch the eyes	Impaired dogs will often exhibit a glassy stare in addition to rapid breathing and poor coordination.
Watch the breathing	Dogs will pant excessively when trying to cool themselves down. Listen for unusual breathing sounds – rapid, loud, whistling sounds
Watch the dog's response to commands	Sluggishness or confusion following commands point to a mentally and physically stressed dog.

SIGNS OF HEAT STROKE/AN EMERGENCY

- Excessive drooling
- Wobbly gait/drunken stagger
- Collapse
- Seizure
- A core temperature of 105.8°F or higher

TREATMENT

GENERAL

- Get the dog out of the sun & heat. Pick the dog up and carry it if any signs of an emergency are present.
- **DO NOT GIVE GLUCOSE** to an overheated dog.
- **DO NOT FORCE WATER** into the dog if they are showing signs of heat exhaustion or heat stroke. Offer small sips.

HEAT EXHAUSTION: (The dog's core body temperature is 105.8°F or lower)

- Get the dog into a tub of cool/cold water quickly.
 - o Ice baths (30% ice/70% water) for 1-3 minute intervals can be used.
- Soak the dog's **ears, arm pits, groin, belly** and **nose**. Also get the neck and back wet.
- Spray the dog down and get a fan blowing on it to increase evaporative cooling.
- Stop cooling when the dog's temperature is down to 103.5°F.
- Let the dog recover in a well ventilated place.
- Give the dog small amounts of cool/cold water frequently.

HEAT STROKE/A DOG IN CRISIS: (The dog's core temperature of 105.8°F and above)

If a veterinarian is on site

- Get the dog off the field ASAP and to the vet.
- The vet will administer cooled IV fluids to the dog.
- Recheck the dog's temperature every 5 minutes (with a rectal thermometer) until it drops to 103.5°F. Continue to monitor the dog's temperature until it has stabilized

If there is no veterinarian on site

- GET TO THE VET – Time is critical.
- Lay the dog on a cool, wet towel in the car. Bring extras to keep cooling the dog while in route.
- Measure the rectal temperature and note the time.
- Spray the dog down with cool/cold water.
- Get a fan blowing or drive with the windows open to increase evaporative cooling.
- Wipe the feet with rubbing alcohol in route to the emergency room.
- Call the emergency room and let them know you are coming.
- Continue to monitor the dog's temperature every 1-5 minutes. If the dog's temperature drops to 103.5°F stop cooling the dog and dry the dog off to avoid hypothermia.

ICE OR NO ICE

- There is some debate about using ice baths to cool down a dog in crisis. Putting a dog in crisis in ice water can cause secondary complications. However, the longer a dog's temperature stays elevated, the more damage to the internal organs will occur. The take home message is there are no good options so **DO NOT LET IT GET TO THIS POINT.**

*Written with input from Lee Dinwiddie, DVM and Jeff Miller, DVM. This is intended to inform the average dog handler, but not replace the oversight and care of a qualified veterinarian.

APPENDIX

Temperature	Small Dog	Medium Dog	Large Dog	Risk Level / Advice
60°	1	1	1	① No evidence of risk: Have fun outside!
65°	1	1	2	② Risk is unlikely: Have fun outside, but be careful!
70°	2	2	3	③ Unsafe potential, depending on breed. Keep an eye on your pet outdoors.
75°	3	3	3	④ Dangerous weather developing. Use caution.
80°	3	3	4	⑤ Potentially life-threatening heat. Avoid prolonged outdoor activity.
85°	4	4	5	
90°	5	5	5	+1 if obese
95°	5	5	5	+1 if brachycephalic breed
				+1 if less than 6 months old or elderly
				-1 if area is shaded from sun
				-1 if water is available

source: adapted from The Feline Animal Condition and Care (FACC)

Petplan

GoPetplan.com

*Note that the relative dew point or humidity on a given day will influence these break points.

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