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# Hot dogs, a vet's view

**Keeping pets cool in summer, by increasing amount of time in the shade, is important to avoid potential organ damage.**

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special to the post

**S**ummer heat is a danger to pets. Overheating can result in organ damage and death. Most of us are aware of the risk of leaving pets in cars but it still happens all the time – and the risks extend beyond cars. Pets left in the backyard, apartment or house can overheat.

Pets, even when they're conditioned and exercised early in the morning, can get too hot on walks and hikes – and certain breeds are much more prone to heat exhaustion. The principal way dogs cool is through panting.

To be effective, the body must be able to release moisture from the lungs. If your pet is dehydrated or if the air is very humid, panting will not work. Dogs also lose body heat through their skin and sweat from their pads.

These are not very helpful at keeping pets cool at the best of times. If the heat outside is close to body temperature, then cooling by loss of radiant heat doesn't work at all.

Overall, dogs are not very good at staying cool. Add on health issues and activity, and the risks go up. Dogs with short muzzles, problems with the upper airway, long hair coats, obesity issues, poor health and advanced age cannot cool themselves down as easily as dogs without these issues. So what can you do to reduce the risk of overheating? Keep your pets in the shade at all times. Don't exercise them when it

is warm or humid. If you have air conditioning, bring them indoors with you. Use water to cool your dog. Teach your dog to like the spray bottle. Mist him with cool water on the head, neck and back. It is best that you never use a spray bottle for disciplining dogs so that you can use this to cool your pet.

If you use wading pools, keep them clean. Bacteria, algae and mosquito larvae grow quickly in the heat. Water warmed from the sun will not be effective in cooling pets.

Ensure your pet is drinking adequately.

You can use the water spray bottle to squirt water in its mouth if you are not sure he is drinking enough. Just because long-haired dogs get hot faster doesn't mean you should shave them. The hair is protecting the skin.

If need be, you can shave their bellies.

Speak with your groomer about what is best for your dog. Many hair coats will not grow in normally after shaving.

Let your dog dig. He is looking for a cool spot to lie. Most importantly, if you suspect that your pet is experiencing the effects of heat exhaustion or heat stroke call your veterinarian immediately. They will give you directions about what to do. Don't wait!

The sooner the body is brought to a normal temperature, the less organ damage will be done. But beware: even with early intervention and aggressive treatment pets can and do die.

Prevention is best. So don't go walking with your overweight bulldog when it's humid and 35°C outside. And remember, that hot pavement can cause blisters on sensitive pads.

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