

BABY, IT'S HOT OUTSIDE!!!!

By Bilinda Marshall © 2009

SEVEN DOGS DIE IN HOT VAN. Headlines similar to this are seen each summer - dogs die while in cars where the temperatures can reach 120 degrees in less than 5 minutes, they die while left out in the yard with no shade or no water, they die while with their owners for exercise, they die while hunting in the early fall, they die while on Charity Pet Walks, they die while out road training to get in show condition, they die while they are under a blow drier which gets too hot, they die while muzzled and left unsupervised.

WHAT IS HEAT STROKE or HEAT EXHAUSTION?

This is a condition where the dog cannot maintain a normal body temperature of less than 103 degrees. Elevated body temperature above 108 degrees becomes life threatening. This is medically referred to as hyperthermia.

HOW HOT IS TOO HOT?

There is not a definite answer because how the dog adapts to heat depends on many things, such as the physical condition of the dog, if there is enough coat to 'shade the skin' and if the dog is well groomed and without mats, has good muscle tone, age, proper weight, nutrition and hydration...

WHAT CAN I DO TO PROTECT MY DOG?

First control the environment – like people, air conditioning is as appreciated by some dogs, however, other dogs prefer to be outside or they are working dogs caring for homes or livestock.

A healthy dog can safely be outside as long as adequate shade for the entire day, morning, noon and late afternoon, is available and an adequate supply of fresh water is always in reach. Additionally, the dog should not be asked to exercise during the heat of the day.

WHAT IF MY DOG GETS TOO HOT?

If you notice heavy panting, a dry nose, or any distress but the dog is still alert, move the dog to a cooler environment. Bring it inside to the air conditioning or to a shady place and encourage it to drink cool water. You may also wet the dog down with cool, not cold, water making sure the dog does not get chilled. If the dog is drinking some water and panting is slowing and the dog is still alert, call your Vet to find out if an exam is needed.

If the dog is down or very lethargic, or unresponsive - **THIS IS AN EMERGENCY**. Take your dog to the **NEAREST** vet. **DO NOT DELAY**. While transporting, wet the dog down with cool water or place cold towels in the 'armpits' and in the groin – but only if there is someone to reposition the towels often so a cool surface is always against the dog's

body. You are working at removing body heat and if the towels get to body temperature, this may stop cooling and become a 'blanket' holding in the heat. Do not force water or other fluids into a dog that is not willing to lap at it, but have water available during the trip. A safe, controlled reduction of body temperature is required; do **NOT** pack the dog in ice.

PREVENTION IS THE BEST CURE.

Hyperthermia, or heat stroke, can come on quickly and brain damage and injury to internal organs is rapid.

Make sure your dog is in good physical condition, has a coat which can protect it from the sun and is not matted into a 'blanket'. Provide shade from the sun at all times. Have cool water always available. Provide a safe environment – and monitor exercise.

Provide good air circulation and ventilation, a fan blowing hot air does not cool a dog – fans work on us because we perspire and the moving air evaporates the moisture on our skin, cooling us – dogs don't perspire so a fan only blows more hot air...

Remember, your dog may mean the world to you, but you are the world to your dog.

This is dedicated to [the Missouri Seven](#).