



## APONC HEALTH NEWSLETTER

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### In this Issue

*In August we present safety tips for dogs in the summer.*

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### Summer heat safety tips for dogs

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Summer is the perfect time to enjoy the outdoors with our dogs. While many of us love soaking up the sun, we need to be mindful of making sure our canine friends do not overheat. Overheating can result in a life-threatening emergency called heatstroke, caused by prolonged exposure to hot or humid environments, and it occurs more often during the summer months.

#### What is heatstroke?

Heatstroke is a life-threatening medical emergency that is caused by a marked elevation in body temperature after prolonged exposure to hot or humid temperatures, or strenuous exercise. Dogs most commonly get heatstroke when they are left alone in a hot car, left outside in hot and humid weather without shade, and when exercising in hot and humid conditions.

#### Who is most at risk for heatstroke?

While some dogs are at higher risk, it's important to note that all dogs are susceptible to heat stroke. Dogs only have sweat glands on their paws so their primary method of dissipating heat to cool themselves is through panting.

Brachycephalic breeds (short-muzzle breeds such as Pugs, Bulldogs, Boston Terriers, Boxers, etc.) cannot pant as efficiently and have a harder time keeping themselves cool, putting them at a higher risk in hot or humid weather.

Extra precaution should also be taken with overweight, elderly dogs, those with underlying heart or breathing conditions, and those with thick or dark colored coats since they are at a higher risk for heatstroke.

#### What are the signs of heatstroke?

Heavy panting, seeking shade, whining, reluctance to play and drooling may be early signs that your dog is overheating.

Bring them into cool air conditioning with access to water immediately. You can also wet them with cool water and place them in front of a fan. Be sure that double-coated breeds (e.g. Siberian

Huskies, Pomeranians, Great Pyrenees, etc.) are wet down to the skin.

If your dog continues to excessively pant and drool, or they begin to have difficulty breathing, bloody diarrhea, vomiting, weakness, confusion, seizures or collapse, then they should be taken to a veterinary hospital immediately — these are signs of heatstroke which is a life-threatening medical emergency.

### **How can I prevent my dog from developing heatstroke and other heat-related injuries?**

The following strategies should be used to keep your dogs cool during warmer weather:

- **Limit activity to the cooler times of the day.**

While the most direct sunlight occurs around noon, the day will be the hottest towards late afternoon, around 3-5 p.m. Plan for walks in the early morning or evening hours to avoid the hottest times of the day.

- **Provide access to shady areas**

Staying in the shade will help avoid excessive heat from direct sunlight.

- **Avoid strenuous exercise**

Strenuous exercise should be especially avoided during the hottest parts of the day, very humid days and during the early summer when pets may not yet be acclimated to higher temperatures.

- **Keep indoors when there are extreme temperatures**

In extreme temperatures, high humidity or on days when there is a dramatic temperature change, it may be best to keep pets cool indoors, ideally with air conditioning or fans.

- **Offer frequent water breaks**

Always be sure to bring water and a collapsible bowl with you when you take your dog out and about and remember to provide frequent opportunities for your dog to have a drink of water. Swimming pools or sprinklers are also effective tools to keep pups cool.

- **Use caution on hot asphalt and pavement**

Blacktop retains a lot of heat and can be much hotter than the ambient temperatures. While the pads on dogs' paw are a lot tougher than our skin, they can still suffer burns from walking on hot pavement. If you cannot put your own hand or stand barefoot on the pavement for about 10 seconds, then it is likely too hot for your dog to walk on too.

- **Never leave your dog in a car unattended**

Cracking the windows is not an effective way to keep the car cool. For example, even if it is only 70 degrees Fahrenheit outside, the temperature inside of the car can increase by 40 degrees in an hour. This can happen even more quickly, since the majority of the temperature increase occurs during the first 15-30 minutes. While you may be tempted to leave them in a running, air-conditioned car, it is unsafe to leave dogs unattended in running cars.