

## Keep an eye on your dog in the heat

By Sarah Abfalter  
Tri-Valley Herald

Article Last Updated: 07/26/2008 09:02:16 PM PDT

As the temperatures rise and people retreat indoors for some air-conditioned relief, it's easy to forget that dogs need relief from the summer sun just as much as humans, and hot weather leaves them at risk of suffering heatstroke.

While the common belief may be to just let the dog cool down in the shade, that may not be enough to prevent heatstroke, which can cause permanent damage to a dog's health and, in some cases, be fatal.

There are several common symptoms of heatstroke in dogs.

"The first and most common thing would be heavy panting and an inability to stand or walk," said Dr. Leanne Taylor of the Bishop Ranch Veterinary Center in San Ramon. "Also, any noticeable changes in your dog's mental state. If your dog doesn't respond to its own name or seems lethargic when it is normally an energetic dog, then there is a good chance he could be suffering from heatstroke and should be taken to the nearest veterinary center immediately."

Other common symptoms of heatstroke include vomiting, loss of bowel control, increased heart rate and dry or white gums.

All dogs are susceptible to heatstroke, but some are more at risk than others. Old and overweight dogs will have a harder time staying cool, as will breeds with short noses, such as pugs or bulldogs. Extra caution should be taken when caring for these animals.

Treating heatstroke and the residual damages, such as kidney disease and brain damage, can be costly, so it is important to be aware of how to prevent it. The two most important factors in preventing heatstroke in dogs are providing adequate water and shade. On especially hot days, dogs should be kept indoors.

"I tell people that the price to clean a stained carpet or to run the AC will ultimately be less expensive than treating heatstroke," Taylor said. "Heatstroke can be very damaging and in a lot of cases fatal, so the best way to keep your dog safe and healthy is keeping them indoors during the summer months."

Another common misconception is that it is OK to leave a dog in the car for a short time as long as the car is in the shade and is properly ventilated. Even with the windows rolled down an inch or so, a car can heat up to more than 100 degrees quickly, causing a dangerous situation.

In order for a dog to receive the best possible treatment if thought to be suffering from heatstroke, it should be taken to the nearest veterinary care center as soon as possible. In the meantime, the dog should be taken out of the sun and doused with cool — not ice cold — water. It is important not to entirely soak the fur in order to prevent shocking the dog's system, causing the blood vessels to constrict and trapping heat inside the dog's body. Applying cold packs in a dog's groin area and under the legs will also help cool the blood that is returning from the limbs on its way back to the heart.

A good rule of thumb, Taylor said, is if it's hot for you, then it's even hotter for your dog.

"It's important for people to be aware of the devastating effect the hot weather can have on their dog," Taylor said. "If it feels hot outside for you, imagine what it would be like to be wearing a full body fur coat all day."