

August 21, 2013

YOUR PETS AND HEATSTROKE

Most animals are unable to sweat all over their bodies like people can. They rely completely upon panting (to get rid of hot air and inhale cool air) to cool themselves. Some sweating occurs through their foot pads and nose, but this is insufficient to effectively cool them. These differences make them especially prone to heatstroke during hot, humid weather.

Symptoms to look for:

Restless behavior - trying to find a cool spot	Lethargy
Excessive grooming in an effort to cool off	Weakness
Excessive or exaggerated panting	Drooling
Unresponsiveness to commands and surroundings	High fever
Staggering, stumbling	Collapsed
Staring/anxious expression	Dark red gums
Rapid heartbeat	Vomiting
Warm/Dry skin	

If your pet is showing signs of heatstroke, it is imperative to get them to a veterinarian immediately as permanent damage to organs can occur.

SAFETY TIPS

Outside

- ✓ If you must take your pet outside make sure they have plenty of access to cool water.
- ✓ Do not ask them to exercise.
- ✓ Do not leave your pet outside on hot days even a shady spot is too hot.
- ✓ Do not leave your pet in the car even if windows are slightly open.
- ✓ Do not chain your pet in the sun, on concrete or asphalt.
- ✓ Do not walk your dog in the heat on rock, sand or asphalt. Sensitive paw pads burn easily.
- ✓ Never leave a muzzle on a dog in hot weather as they cannot pant freely.
- ✓ Be aware that a pet can get heatstroke while swimming.

Inside

- ✓ If your pet will be indoors on a hot day, give her access to water and a cool area.
- ✓ Keep an air conditioner or fan on.
- ✓ Do not confine the animal to any room where temperatures are especially high.
- ✓ Even garages can be too hot and have insufficient air movement.

Extra Precautions

- ✓ Short-nosed breeds such as Pugs, Shi Tzu's, Pekingese, Bulldogs and Boxers, who have shorter faces or noses are especially prone to suffering from heatstroke as they aren't able to pant as efficiently as dogs with longer faces. This also stands for short nosed cat breeds such as Persians and Exotics.
- ✓ Very old, very young, or sick animals are at more risk.

AND THEN THERE'S THOSE RASCALLY RABBITS....

Heat can be very dangerous for rabbits. They are very susceptible to heat stroke and because they are prey animals and will hide symptoms as long as they can. It is important to observe your rabbit/s daily. Rabbits are adapted to live underground when external temperatures rise. They can begin to overheat at temperatures as low as 24°C. If your rabbits or guinea pigs have an outdoor hutch and run, make sure they have plenty of shade. If you don't have a naturally shady spot in the garden,

you can put a sunshade over the hutch and run using towels or even a mobile shelter such as a gazebo. It's also important not to put your rabbit's house against sheds, garages or house walls - these radiate heat even when in shade.

Watch out for the signs of overheating in your bunny:

- Lethargy
- Panting
- Dehydration Acting Confused
- Salivating
- Weakness/Slow movement
- Reddening of the ears
- Convulsing

If your rabbit exhibits any of these symptoms begin misting their ears with cool water and immediately call your vet. **DO NOT EVER submerge your rabbit in cold water** as this can cause shock. **Dampen your rabbit's ears** - Since rabbits lose heat through their ears, you can lightly dampen them to speed up the cooling process. If your rabbit is comfortable with it, you can use a spray bottle to mist their skin, or simply use a wet cloth or your hands to dab their ears.

To help prevent this condition in your pet rabbit, here are several indoor/outdoor tips to help keep your bunny cool in high temperatures:

- ✓ WATER! Provide plenty of cool fresh water. You can add an ice cube or two.
- ✓ WET VEGGIES! Give plenty of them to keep bunny hydrated. Leave a bit of water on them after rinsing to add to water intake.
- ✓ Set up a fan that will blow past the rabbit without blowing directly on him. Be sure to bunny proof any electrical cords.
- ✓ Run an air conditioner in the room where the bunny lives, but be careful of extreme temperature changes.
- ✓ Move bunny to a cooler part of the house, like the basement, during hot days.
- ✓ Open windows to provide a breeze.
- ✓ Fill large plastic soda bottles with water and freeze them. Wrap in towel and place in cage. (do not let frozen bottle directly touch sensitive skin and do not let the bunny chew the bottle) A bunny can relax against or near them for relief.
- ✓ Tunnels, old cardboard boxes or tubes, and a large litter tray, filled with damp soil can help rabbits and guinea pigs to stay cool as well as providing opportunities to hide or dig.
- ✓ Provide an area for your bunny that is out of direct sunlight. A little shade can make a big difference in temperature.
- ✓ Brush out any loose fur regularly.
- ✓ Stone or ceramic tiles provide a nice cool feeling on bunny bellies. Wrap them in wet towels and place in cool areas.
- ✓ Check on your pets as often as possible - early identification of problems can prevent them from escalating. Rabbits should also have their bottoms checked at least twice a day to make sure they're clean and that there's no sign of fly eggs, which look like miniature grains of rice and can hatch within hours.

Finally, if you are very concerned it is best to contact your veterinarian. Safe is ALWAYS better than sorry.