



# Navarro Small Animal Clinic

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## Heat Stress

By: Dr. Shana Bohac

With the temperatures already in the upper nineties, the sweltering summer is beginning. It is important to think about your pet's ability to tolerate the scorching heat.

In order to protect your pet from the heat always provide plenty of fresh, cool, and clean water. Provide fresh water on a daily basis. Make sure that the water cannot be tipped over and spilt. It is imperative that your pet stays well hydrated. You may even consider carrying a bottle of water in case your pet needs to rehydrate during their daily exercise routine. Take your dogs for their walks early in the morning or late in the evening when it is cooler. Keep in mind that your pet is wearing an extra layer therefore they are much warmer than you are. If for some reason your pet suddenly stops or sits while walking or exercising it may be time to take a break. You may need to tailor your exercise program for each pet on an individual basis, depending on age, body condition, and coat type. Make sure you walk your dogs on grass, rather than hot pavement to prevent burning of their paws. You can always provide your dogs with a swimming pool to cool off in. Grooming your pets frequently to remove excess hair and mats is beneficial in keeping them cool and comfortable. It is also very important to provide access to shade at all times when your pet is outdoors.

There are some key signs that you need to look for which may indicate your pet has overheated. These include severe panting that does not stop even after a period of rest, excessive drooling, increased body temperature (normal is up to 102.5°F), rapid heart rate, vomiting, passing bloody or tarry stool, muscle tremors, seizures, passing out, and lack of coordination.

If your pet is showing mild signs of heat stress, which include panting, drooling, and increased body temperature it is best to bring them inside and allow them to calm down and cool off. After 20 minutes if there is no improvement, a cool water bath (NOT cold water) can be given to help lower the core body temperature and rubbing alcohol can be placed on the foot pads to assist with cooling. If your dog is experiencing severe clinical signs, such as passing bloody stools, seizures, muscle tremors, loss of consciousness, lack of coordination, etc you will need to seek veterinary attention immediately. Without medical attention your pet could experience serious organ damage and potentially deadly systemic illness.

The best treatment for heat stress or stroke is prevention. Make sure you have taken all possible precautions during the summer to protect your pet. Animals have much fewer sweat glands than their human counterparts do. Their sweat glands are found primarily on the paws and nose. Pets most susceptible to heat stroke are animals with short noses, longer or thicker hair, and younger or older

animals. Every pet is unique and can tolerate time outside differently. If your pet spends most of its time indoors, then prolonged periods of outdoor activity will make your pet more susceptible to heat stroke.