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Heatstroke: A Summertime Danger to All Pets in Arizona

Between 2000 and 2012, 1,535 humans died in AZ from exposure to excessive natural heat (per Arizona Department of Health Services). The risk of heatstroke is much greater for animals than humans because pets cannot control their own environment as well as we do.

Often the severity of heat stroke is not apparent to owners until the animal goes into shock. Signs include excessive panting or open mouth breathing, vomiting, bloody diarrhea, pale gums (gray color) and seizures.

If you suspect heatstroke in your pet:

- Move your animal into an air-conditioned area immediately, and apply room temperature water to the entire animal. Do not cool the animal too rapidly (such as with ice) as hypothermia can follow the heat stroke creating additional complications.
- Take a rectal temperature. Normal temperature is 99-103 degrees F. Most heat stroke temperatures are > 105 degrees F.
- Proceed immediately to your veterinarian or any emergency veterinary hospital!

Tips to help your pet avoid heatstroke:

- Make sure all animals kept outside have access to water and shade. The water dish should be stable so it does not accidentally tip over. If animals are outside for long periods of time, you might consider installing a misting system.
- NEVER LEAVE YOUR PETS IN AN UNATTENDED CAR. On a hot day the temperature inside a car can reach 215 degrees within 10 minutes – even with the windows cracked open!
- Try not to walk your animals during the heat of the day, 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Neoprene booties will help prevent them from burning their feet on concrete and asphalt surfaces.
- Small animals (such as rabbits and guinea pigs) can die from heatstroke if they are left in the sun. This can happen in as little as 10 minutes in temperatures as low as 90 degrees.
- Two-liter bottles or five-gallon buckets of water can be frozen and left for your pets (homemade air conditioner)
- Animals with heart problems, diabetes, Cushing's disease, obesity, advanced age, and brachycephalic dog breeds (Pugs and Bulldogs) are much more susceptible to the heat than other breeds.