

HEAT!! Bulldog Enemy #1

By Betty Fisher

Heat is probably the number one danger to the Bulldog and all of the other flat-faced breeds. A dog's primary cooling mechanism is the ability to pant and dissipate body heat. Short nosed dogs have a reduced ability to cool by panting, coupled with the fact that many of them have a reduced breathing capacity caused by any one or all of the following: pinched nostrils, elongated soft palette, small trachea or extraneous tissue in the throat. Additionally the Bulldog is a very heavy boned, dense bodied dog. When this mass becomes overheated it is very difficult to reduce that temperature. Dogs, in general, are far more susceptible to heat stroke than people.

In view of these facts the best way to treat overheating is to never let it happen! Prevention is by far a safer and more effective way to combat enemy #1, *heat*.

Heat stroke is not just the enemy of short nosed breeds. Every summer dogs of all breeds are overcome in cars, herding dogs collapse, dogs playing in the sun can get heat stroke and hunting or field dogs suffer from too much heat, humidity and/or excitement.

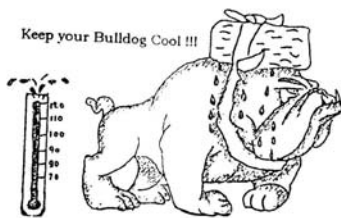
Heat Plus Excitement

Heat combined with excitement or stress is the biggest danger to our dogs. When our dogs become excited they begin to pant. When they become warm they begin to pant. Since the Bulldog cooling system is inefficient you can quickly exceed its' capacity and then the dog is in trouble.

How hot does it have to be for the dog to be in danger? The temperature can be down in the 70's and our dogs can be in danger. Temperature, humidity and the dog's total breathing capacity are all factored in the dangerous heat equation. The amount of air circulation, whether the dog is in the shade or the sun, how stressed he is all make a difference in the effect of heat plus excitement.

Danger Signs!!!

How will I know when my Bulldog is danger?



Some danger signs are:

- Unusually sluggish or unresponsive
- Pale or dark red gums, may be very dry
- Erratic breathing
- Glazed eyes
- Vomiting
- In the final stages the dog will suffer convulsions and unconsciousness

If you observe any of these symptoms it is *imperative* that you take action *immediately!*

Get your dog into the shade and apply cold water or hose gently with a continuous stream of cool water. Submerge in a tub of cool water if possible.

If possible apply ice packs or cold towels.

If your dog is conscious allow him to drink small amounts of water or lick ice cubes. Do not force him to drink.

Get veterinary attention immediately. You may save his life!

Prevention

Prevention of heat stroke is much easier and very much less likely to result in the loss of your bulldog. Begin by becoming aware of the weather. Observe your dog when he plays or is warm. How does he act? How much does he pant? What color are his gums when he is panting? The more you know about your dog's normal actions the quicker you will realize when he is in trouble.

Good heat management will keep your dog healthy and safe.

- Be sure there is shade every place you keep your dog.
- Don't take your dog in the car during the warm hours unless absolutely necessary.
- Monitor the dog's playing, especially with children. Dogs will not stop just because they are too warm.
- Use fans placed at the dog's level. If your dog still chews protect the cord from his teeth by placing it under or behind furniture or running it through a piece of PVC piping. You can also place it behind a gate or exercise pen.
- Give your dog plenty of cool water. My outdoor water pan is a cement mixing plastic trough from the home improvement store. Keeps the water cool and you don't run out if you should neglect to fill it everyday. Your dog can use it like a wading pool if he wishes.
- Use large indoor water bowls. Never leave your dog any place without access to cool water.
- Provide ice cubes on warm days. Not just a few, entire trays of ice.
- Provide a child's plastic wading pool. The 4' diameter allows two or three dogs to play and has sides low enough for bulldogs to go in and out easily.
- Soak your dog when he starts to pant. Don't wait until he is panting heavily. Prevention of heat exhaustion is far easier than treatment. Put him in the tub or under the hose and SOAK. Many people tell me their dog doesn't like to get wet. Well, tough. You are the caretaker of your dog and you are the responsible adult. If your dog needs to be wet to protect him, put him on a leash and soak him down. I praise, saying "let's cool down, wow doesn't that feel good?" Make them believe this is wonderful and give a cookie after you finish. Yes, he will go back into the house wet. Saving his life is more important than saving the furniture. Put him in the kitchen with a fan. You can find a way to deal with a wet dog.
- Riding in the car takes special preparation. A parked car, with windows open a couple of inches can reach 120 degrees in less than thirty minutes! Carry a gallon-insulated jug of water at all times. Keep water in front of your dog at all times. There are plastic water dishes with a top that prevents the water from splashing out. One brand is Water Hole. Fill the dish with ice cubes. Put a wet towel down in the car. If your dog starts to pant, soak him with your water in the gallon jug. I have stopped at a gas station, grabbed the water hose and drenched a dog. Yes he goes back in the car wet. Carry a towel or two to protect the seat cover and also to use for wetting him if necessary.
- I recently purchased a small oscillating fan at Wal-Mart for less than \$10. It plugs into the cigarette lighter and keeps the air moving when the car is stopped at a light or whatever. There are also battery operated fans that can hang from a crate or exercise pen.
- If your dog does get hot on you and his breathing becomes constricted or he is vomiting up white, thick foam, a lemon or lemon/lime soft drink will sometimes help loosen up the congestion. If this happens you need to find a vet, soon!
- Recently I saw a non-bulldog owner using an ordinary garden sprayer, the kind with a 1-2 gallon tank with a wand sprayer, to mist their dog. Of course, the sprayer was new and never used for pesticides. Would be easy to carry in your car and use wherever you take your bulldog.
- Purchase or make a cool pad. These pads are made of durable material and filled with the water absorbing crystals found in nurseries. When soaked for 30-40 minutes they will remain damp and cool for up to twenty-four hours. They are becoming available in dog supply catalogs. They can be used in the car, placed in front of a fan or used in crates or exercise pens.



Common sense and good management will go a long way to keeping your dogs safe in hot weather. I live inland from San Diego in So. Calif. Summer temperature often reach 105 degrees plus and I have no air conditioning. There are fans in almost every room. The dogs have their own set of ice cube trays and often use 8-10 trays a day. On the really hot days I place wet towels on plastic in front of each fan. By following these practices I have never had a dog get into trouble, but I do admit to being fanatic about the care of my dogs in warm weather.