

Dog Days of Summer Increase Risk of Dehydration

As days get longer and hotter, dog owners must vigilantly take steps to prevent dehydration in their dogs.

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Dr. Anne Chauvet, founder of Veterinary Neuro Services and Pet Rehab & Performance Center in Florida, informs pet owners about causes, tests, prevention and treatments for dehydration in dogs.

The biggest warm-weather mistake pet owners make is leaving a dog unattended in a car. "Everyone has to know by now never, ever to leave an animal unattended in a car in warm weather. Even in a very short period of time, animals can become dehydrated enough to require veterinary attention," says Chauvet. Excessive panting, diarrhea and vomiting can lead to dehydration.

Outdoors, dogs must have access to a cool shaded area and plenty of water. How much water? The recommended daily amount is two ounces of water per two pounds of dog.

Two tests can help determine if your dog is dehydrated. For the first test, pinch and pull up loose skin over the dog's rear or shoulders. If, when released, the skin does not go back quickly and completely, your dog may be dehydrated.

For the second test, lift your dog's lip and press its gum with your fingers, causing the spot to turn white. If it does not return to its natural shade of pink in less than two seconds, your dog may be dehydrated.

For mild cases of dehydration, make sure your dog drinks fluid. Canned dog food and low-sodium chicken broth also provide hydration. Be sure to change water frequently.

Lethargy, hiding, or negative results from both dehydration tests point to a serious case of dehydration. Take your dog to the veterinarian who will administer liquids intravenously and test for serious illnesses such as diabetes and renal failure, which are related to dehydration.

This summer, be watchful and keep your dog happy and hydrated.