



Heat Stroke In Pets

With this unusually warm weather we have been having we need to make sure that our pets are comfortable. Unlike us our pets cannot shed clothes until they are at a more comfortable temperature and some are not welcome in the house to sit beside the air conditioning. Therefore it is important to keep in mind that the heat affects our pets just like it affects us.

Heat stroke is characterised by an increase in body temperature, usually over 41°C. This increase in temperature can be caused by a hot or humid environment or by strenuous exercise. Seizures can also increase the body temperature, especially if they are long and uncontrolled. A “fever” can also increase the core body temperature but the pathway behind this is different.

There can be serious consequences for an increase in body temperature. Heart rate increases due to the dilation of blood vessels to try and dissipate the heat. Dehydration occurs quickly and multiple organs can fail.

Organs affected by heat stroke include: the gut, central nervous system, kidneys, heart and blood vessels.

Signs of heat stroke include:

- ◆ Increased heart rate
- ◆ Increased breathing
- ◆ Dehydration
- ◆ Drooling
- ◆ Funny gum colour with prolonged refill time
- ◆ Collapse/shock
- ◆ Disorientation
- ◆ Abdominal pain
- ◆ Coma
- ◆ Seizure



Please note that if you are worried that your pet has heat stroke but when they are offered water will not drink it, it does not mean they aren't thirsty. Often in serious heat stroke your pet will feel too ill to drink anything.

So what do you do if you suspect your pet is suffering from heat stroke?

Obviously this justifies a call to the vet. While someone is on the phone to the vet it would be helpful to have someone available to try and get your pet's temperature down. This can be done by filling up hot water bottles with cold water and placing on the skin along with towels soaked in cold water. On the way to the clinic have the pet in the car in front of the air conditioning. Once at the clinic we will be able to take further measures such as setting up IV fluids and oxygen therapy where needed.

Depending on how severely affected your animal is they may need to stay with us for some time. As usual the best treatment is prevention so please be careful when leaving pets in cars and have a think about where they are kenneled or tied up. Make sure your pet has access to shade and water at all times.

*** Important Note ***

If your pet gets hurt or becomes sick it is best to give us a call BEFORE any medication is given, this includes previously prescribed drugs. It is important as all drugs have side effects and if you give your pet a drug that they have been prescribed in the past for a different condition these side effects could become serious.

Senior Cats

Cat's health changes with age. As your cat ages you may find that it sleeps more, eats or drinks more or less than normal, loses or gains weight, agility changes and mental state alters.

As your cat ages it is a good idea to see your veterinarian more frequently to ensure that your cat is still healthy. It is beneficial to seek your veterinarian's advice early on if you are concerned as it is easier to treat diseases in their earlier stages.

The reason that your senior cat is 'slowing down' cannot always be blamed on aging. Sometimes there may be an underlying medical issue that is at fault.

Things to monitor in your senior cat include:

- ◆ Grooming habits
- ◆ Skin and coat condition
- ◆ Appetite and thirst
- ◆ Weight changes
- ◆ Toileting habits
- ◆ Lumps and bumps



As with humans, animal's senses dull as they age. If you find your cat is less interested in food, it may be because their smell and taste senses are weakened. Try to heat up canned food to make food more attractive.

In terms of behaviour, you will find your cat mellows as it ages and is less willing to play like when it was a kitten. However, if you find your cat is more lethargic or quiet than normal, there may be other issues and it might be time to consult your veterinarian.

There are a few common diseases that cats can get as they age, with one of the most common being hyperthyroidism. This is when there is over production of thyroid hormone by the thyroid gland so you may find your cat is eating a lot more than normal, but not putting on any weight, or even losing weight. If this is left untreated heart and liver disease ensue, and your cat will become sicker. Other senior cat diseases include kidney disease, dental disease, liver disease, arthritis and hypertension.

These diseases can be assessed through a thorough check over by your veterinarian, with blood tests and further diagnostics being used to ascertain the reason for a cats poor health.

Overall, it is wise to get your veterinarian to check over your cat at least once a year from 7-10 years of age. This allows any diseases to be picked up early in their course and for your cat to live its life to its potential (possibly 20 years!).

Case of the Month

Sissy is an 11 year old Siamese cat that came into see us with a very vague history of walking with her belly low to the ground and just not being her normal self. There had been some bruising evident on her tummy the week before but it had since healed up. When she was examined a large solid mass was felt in her belly, mid-way along her spine.

At this point we were thinking Sissy had an abscess, cancer, a haematoma/seroma or something bladder or kidney related. A needle was placed into this mass and about 400ml of blood-stained fluid was removed. The fluid was sent to the lab for analysis and came back as most likely being urine.

From this we thought the most likely cause was an "uro-retroperitoneum" as a result of ureteral rupture. Further testing was done to confirm this diagnosis.

An uro-retroperitoneum is an accumulation of urine around the kidney. The urine is confined to around the kidney by the capsule in which the kidney is located. This prevents it from freely emptying into the abdomen. The cause is usually trauma causing the ureter (tube carrying urine from the kidney to the bladder) to rupture.

Sissy underwent surgery to remove the effected kidney. Her recovery went very well and she is now back home with her family feeling much better.

