



Extreme heat – health advice

Caring for pets and wildlife

Like people, animals can also suffer heat stress and heatstroke in hot weather if they don't keep cool. It's important to take care of your own pet during hot weather, but remember that other wildlife may also suffer heat stress during this time. Essentially, both your pet and wild animals will have the same needs - **shade, shelter and plenty of cool water**.

Looking after your pets

- If possible, bring your pets inside when it is hot. If they cannot be inside, make sure there are some sheltered shady spots in the garden where they can rest.
- If you have birds, pet rabbits and guinea pigs in cages, make sure they are under shade and not in the sun. Check there will be shade at all times of the day as that will change depending on where the sun is.
- Make sure your pets have plenty of **clean, fresh, cool water to drink** and that it is not placed in the sun. Putting ice blocks in the water will help keep it cool.
- Have two large drinking bowls in different spots in case one runs out of water or gets knocked over.
- Don't leave your pet's food outside in the heat. If your pet does not eat the food when first given, bring it inside and put in the fridge until later.
- Make sure your pet is micro-chipped and registered with the local council – if you become separated during an emergency this will ensure you are reunited as quickly as possible.



Special precautions

- **Don't leave pets in a closed garden shed or garage** as these can heat up very quickly on a hot day, putting your pet at risk.
- **Never leave pets alone in a car** in any circumstance, even if the windows are partly open. The temperature can reach 50°C very quickly in an enclosed vehicle and animals can get heat stroke or even die.

Exercising dogs

- If you have a dog, avoid exercising (chasing a ball) or walking in the heat. Take your dog for a walk early in the morning or later in the evening when it is cooler.
- Don't let your dog walk on hot surfaces (pavements, bitumen roads or hot sand) as their paws are sensitive and can get burnt.

What to do if your animal shows signs of heat stress

- Old or very young animals can get stressed very quickly during hot weather and need watching carefully for signs they may be heat stressed.
- If your animal shows signs of heat stress (sweating, panting and drooling, wide or long tongue hanging out) move them to a cool place and try to get them to drink water even if you have to pour some into their mouth. If they have red gums or red conjunctiva (area under the eyelid), urgent attention is needed, ideally from a vet.
- If a dog shows signs of being overheated, the best way to cool off is to get them to stand in water up to their bellies. Dogs will cool off faster this way rather than spraying water on their backs. You could also try putting wet towels over their back and putting them in front of a fan until they cool off.
- Cats may benefit from being wiped with a cool damp washer.
- **Contact a vet without delay** if you are worried that your animal is suffering from the heat. This could save your pet's life.

Looking after wildlife

- On extremely hot days, wild animals may be forced to come into areas that they would not normally visit, such as suburban homes close to the bush.
- If you live near the bush, you can help by providing a place for wild animals to escape the heat. As most household pets and wild animals do not mix well, keep in mind you will need to keep your pets away from wildlife.
- In extreme heat, animals such as wallabies, possums, echidnas, bandicoots, birds and lizards all need access to cool, fresh water and shade. It is possible they will seek the same water you have provided for your pets.
- If possible, provide a bowl of cool, fresh water in an area that your pet cannot usually access, for example, well away from the fenced area provided for your dog. Consider refilling the bowl with cool water every few hours, as wild animals do not drink warm water.

For more information, visit www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/peh/alerts/standing_health_alerts/extreme_heat