**KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER:**

* In hot weather, dogs are at risk of dehydration, heatstroke and hyperthermia (elevated body temperature).
* Do not work your dog when it is over 32 degrees centigrade. You will need alternatives like your long cane.
* A simple test to determine if it is too hot to work your dog is to place your flat hand palm down on the pavement. If you cannot hold your hand there for longer than five seconds, it is too hot to work the dog.

**STEPS TO PREVENT HEAT STROKE INCLUDE:**

* + - Modify your routes in hot weather to incorporate public transport and shaded areas.
    - Take a taxi to your destination if possible.
    - Always carry water with you in warmer weather and stop in shade to give the dog rest and an opportunity to drink.
    - Travel earlier in the morning or later in the evening on hot days.
    - If you must go out in the middle of the day and it is very hot, leave your dog at home with access to water and shade if possible or with a carer.
    - Restrict exercise activity in warmer weather.
    - Never leave your dog alone in a car.

**IF THE DOG DOES SHOW SIGNS OF HEAT STRESS:**

* + - Immediately remove the dog from the heat into air-conditioning or shade.
    - Wet the dog with cool but not chilled water and wet the area around the dog.
    - If the dog is showing severe signs of heat stress see the vet immediately.
    - Even if the dog shows signs of recovery after being cooled down, you should still see a vet.

Dogs are susceptible to heat-related illnesses. They will often continue working for much longer than they should. It is our responsibility to ensure that the dog is not pushed beyond its limit, or worked in temperatures that will cause health problems.

**IN EXCESSIVE HEAT, DOGS ARE AT RISK OF:**

* Heat-stroke
* Hyperthermia (elevated body temperature)
* Dehydration
* Organ failure
* Burnt pads

**Signs of heat stroke include:**

* Increased heart rate
* Excessive panting
* Dehydration
* Increased salivation
* Thick, sticky saliva
* Reddened gums and moist tissues of the body
* Bright red tongue
* Irregular heart beats
* Fluid build-up in the lungs; sudden breathing distress
* Disorientation/dizziness
* Vomiting
* Diarrhoea
* [Weakness](http://petmd.com/dog/conditions/neurological/c_dg_seizures_convulsions)
* Muscle tremors
* Depression
* Wobbly, uncoordinated or drunken gait or movement
* Unconsciousness

**PREVENTION:**

In order to prevent heat stress (hyperthermia, heat-stroke) and other heat-related problems:

* Do not work your dog when it is over 32 degrees.
* Place your hand palm down on the pavement. If you cannot hold your hand there for longer than 5 seconds it is too hot to work your dog.
* Modify your travel when the temperature gets to 28 degrees and above. For example:
  + Shorter routes
  + More breaks
  + Plenty of drinking opportunities for the dog
  + Use public transport
  + Take a taxi to your destination
  + Seek shaded areas if possible
* Travel early in the morning or later in the evening if it is going to be a hot day.
* Carry water and give your dog regular opportunities to drink.
* Restrict exercise activity in hot weather.
* Avoid hot sand, concrete or asphalt areas where heat is reflected and there is no shade available.
* If you must go out in the middle of the day and it is very hot, leave your dog at home or with someone if possible and use your long cane.
* Ensure your dog has access to shade and/or indoors when at home.
* Ensure your dog always has access to fresh water.
* NEVER leave your dog in the car on a hot day. It can take just six minutes for dogs to suffer severe heat exhaustion and die. Here is what RSPCA Victoria says about leaving dogs in cars:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Every summer the RSPCA is inundated with calls from concerned citizens alerting it to animals that have been left or locked in hot cars. The RSPCA cannot stress enough that it takes just six minutes or less for an animal to suffer severe heat exhaustion in a car and die.   Tests conducted by Melbourne’s Metropolitan Ambulance Service on a 29-degree day with the car’s air conditioning having cooled the interior to a comfortable 20 degrees showed it took just 10 minutes for the temperature to more than double to 44 degrees. In a further 10 minutes it had tripled to a deadly 60.2 degrees. As with humans, exposure to these types of temperatures can be extremely dangerous.  Dogs are particularly at risk as they cool themselves by panting. If the air around them is too hot - especially if they don’t have access to water - dogs are physically unable to regulate their body temperature. In the time it takes to pick up a few things for dinner at the supermarket and get through the check-out, a dog left in a hot car could have already died an agonising death.   |  | | --- | | **Do not leave your dog in a vehicle. Pets can overheat even when the windows are down or the car is in the shade.** |   RSPCA Victoria also urges pet owners to not leave an animal on the back of a utility without adequate shade, shelter and water. Again, animals left in these conditions can quickly suffer from severe dehydration and heat exhaustion. If you know that you will most likely be away from your pet, even for a couple of minutes, while you are out, it is much better to leave an animal at home where they are comfortable and have access to water than leave it alone in a car. Even if parked in the shade, the temperature inside a car on a summer’s day can reach hazardous levels. |

**HEATSTROKE FIRST AID:**

If you do notice signs of heatstroke, follow these steps:

* Remove dog from heat immediately. Preferably into an air-conditioned building or, at the very least, into the shade.
* Wet down the area around the dog to help lower the ambient temperature.
* Lower temperature by wetting with cool but not chilled water and setting up a circulating fan.
* See a vet as soon as possible. Even if your dog appears to be recovering, it is still important that you have the dog examined by a vet as he or she may still be dehydrated or have other complications.
* If your dog is displaying severe signs of heat stress, get him or her to a vet immediately.

**FURTHER READING:**

RSPCA <http://www.rspcavic.org/services/emergency-assistance/dogs-in-hot-cars>

<http://justsixminutes.com.au/>

<http://www.petmd.com/dog/conditions/cardiovascular/c_dg_heat_stroke?page=show>

<http://www.humanesociety.org/animals/resources/tips/pets_safe_heat_wave.html>