

## Recognizing the Dangers of Overheating in Your Dog

The potential for a dog to overheat can result in decreased performance as well as serious health conditions. A dog does not regulate his body temperature by sweating. Most adult dogs are good at controlling their body temperatures, except when they are put in stressful situations.

It is important to be aware of the signs of overheating, so you can take steps to avoid problems. “While a slight case of overheating will cause discomfort, the situation can advance to serious health problems if not attended to immediately,” says Purina Director of Sporting Dog Programs Bob West. “As a dog’s body temperature rises, the dog compensates by panting. Panting draws cooler air to the back of the throat and across the tongue, which cools the blood circulating to the core of the dog.”

High humidity adds to the risk of overheating because it reduces the effect of panting since the saliva evaporates less quickly. While panting is an effective short-term solution, it is an inefficient method of lowering body temperature in the long run because the panting itself uses energy and that generates additional heat.

Watch for these signs:

- Panting is the first sign a dog is at risk of overheating.
- If the panting escalates to forceful panting, it is time to cease all activity.
- As a dog tires, he becomes less animated and his facial expression may show concern or apprehension.
- A stressed dog may slow his pace and cover less ground.
- Lower tail carriage and less tail action are common.

West encourages owners to carry a thermometer when working with dogs. Dogs perform best when their body temperature is near 102 degrees. They begin to shut down when their temperature approaches 105 degrees. It helps to exercise dogs for short periods in warm conditions and whenever possible in the coolest times of the day, avoiding high humidity.

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