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HEAT STROKE

Yesterday, I was driving home from shopping. The temperature in my car read 29 and was very aware that with the humidex, the outdoor temperature was 34, as reported on the radio. I passed many people jogging and thought to myself, what fortitude. I could hardly walk in that environment, let alone jog. I then passed a young, fit woman jogging with a golden retriever. I couldn't believe it. This has inspired me to base my article on "heat stroke and heat exhaustion" in dogs.

Unlike humans, dogs can't perspire to cool off because they lack sweat glands in their skin. They can only dissipate heat through a few places, primarily their tongue and airway. So they are always in danger of overheating, particularly when the process of evaporation from the tongue is diminished by humid weather.

Hyperthermia (overheating) occurs when body temperature increases faster than it dissipates and body temperature exceeds 39.2 c (102.5 f) Listed below, in order of mild to severe, are the symptoms.

Heavy panting, slow pace, intense thirst, brilliant red gums, rapid heart rate, rapid laboured breathing, confusion, staggering, fainting, vomiting and diarrhea, seizures, coma and death.

Treatment definitely requires medical intervention and initial intervention by the dog's owner includes hosing with cool (not extremely cold) water, wrapping with cool wet blankets and encourage drinking, while seeking immediate medical attention.

If it is too hot for you and you need to remove layers of clothing while jogging, or even walking then it is definitely too hot for your dog. Remember they are wearing a fur coat that can't be removed. In the summer, regardless of the temperature, always take along water for your dog so they don't dehydrate, and never leave your dog in the car. Even in cool weather, on a sunny day, the car temperature can reach 48 c in 20 minutes.

Now that summer is finally here, please enjoy what is left of it and take care.