



Extreme Heat Poses Danger for Pets, Livestock

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MADISON — Wisconsin’s humane veterinarian is reminding pet and livestock owners to take extra steps to protect animals in the extreme heat predicted later this week.

“Dogs and cats pant, they don’t perspire, and panting is not very effective in extreme hot weather,” says state humane veterinarian Dr. Yvonne Bellay of the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection. “Give them ventilation and water, and keep them out of cars and airless rooms.”

Heat stroke is a very real threat for both pets and livestock, and can be fatal even with prompt treatment. Pets that have already suffered heat stroke once are more susceptible, as are animals that are very young or very old, have health problems, are overweight, or are snub-nosed.

Signs of heat stroke in small animals include panting, staring or stupor, breathing difficulty, an anxious expression, refusal to obey, warm dry skin, fever, rapid heartbeat, vomiting, diarrhea, seizures, and collapse.

In large animals, signs of heat stress and stroke may include restlessness, stumbling, increased heart rate and salivation, panting, collapse, and convulsions.

“If you see any of these signs, call your veterinarian immediately,” Bellay says.

For pets, get the animal out of direct heat and get it wet however you can – with towels soaked in cool water, with a hose, in a wading pool. If you use towels, it will be most effective on less hairy parts of the body, like a dog’s belly and legs. Even if the animal seems to revive after a few minutes, get it to a veterinarian, because its temperature may rise again or fall well below normal, she says.

For cattle and other large animals, hosing them down may be effective until the veterinarian arrives.

Bellay offers these tips for pet owners:

- Never leave an animal in a parked vehicle, even for a few minutes. Even with windows open a few inches, the temperature in a parked car may hit 120 degrees within minutes. When running errands, leave your dog home. When traveling, stop at places where your pet can get out of the vehicle.
- Provide fresh, cool drinking water at all times – including in your vehicle when you’re traveling.
- Outdoor kennels must be well-ventilated and shaded, with water in bowls that will not tip.
- Don’t exercise pets on hot days or warm, humid nights.
- Clip long coats to about an inch -- shorter clips or shaving can leave dogs vulnerable to sunburn.

For livestock owners, Bellay advises:

- Avoid transporting animals in heat over 80 degrees with high humidity.
- Park vehicles loaded with livestock in the shade.
- Deliver animals at night or in early morning, and use wet bedding to transport hogs in hot weather.
- Provide well-ventilated air space in farm trucks, barns, or any enclosure.
- Provide fresh drinking water at all times, and provide shade in resting, eating and watering areas.
- Use a water sprinkling system to cool animals.

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