

Heat stress in animals

High temperatures and humidity can cause heat stress to animals, just like it does in people. It's important to monitor your pet at this time to make sure it remains cool, healthy and safe.

There are several visible signs associated with heat stress in animals, including:

- increased effort breathing or difficulty breathing;
- excessive panting;
- drooling;
- bright red gums;
- anxious behaviour, which includes agitation and excess barking;
- excessive water consumption;
- vomiting or diarrhea;
- weakness, dazed expression or incoherent behaviour; and
- collapse or seizure.

It is important to try to keep an animal dealing with heat stress as calm as possible. If symptoms are less severe, immediately move the animal to a cool and shady area. To help bring down body temperature, you can:

- place the animal near a fan or air conditioning;
- wrap the animal in wet, cool towels or place ice packs wrapped in towels on the animal;
- splash cool water on the animal;
- spray the animal's body with a spray bottle filled with cool water; or
- offer water to drink if the animal is not vomiting.

If your animal is showing symptoms related to non-complicated heat stress, the actions above should result in the symptoms improving within about 5 minutes. If the signs worsen over time or your animal appears distressed, they should be taken to their vet immediately.

Some types of animals are more susceptible to heat stress and should be more closely monitored, including those that are:

- dark coloured and with long or thick coats,
- flat-faced (i.e. pug and Shih Tzu breeds),
- overweight,
- very old or young,
- naturally hyper, anxious, or active, or
- living with underlying medical conditions, such as heart or lung disease.

If Manitobans are concerned about the welfare of an animal, they are encouraged to contact the Animal Care Line at 204-945-8000, toll-free at 1-888-945-8001 or at animalcare@gov.mb.ca.