**Heat Stroke in French Bulldogs**

Every dog is a potential victim of heat exhaustion, but the shorter breathing system of the French Bulldog is what puts them at such very strong risk for heat stroke. Shorter airway=less possibility of cooling the air which the dogs draws into its body. Dogs do not sweat. Their only means of reducing built-up body heat is by panting.

The leading cause of heat exhaustion, and its advancing into heat stroke; is leaving a dog in a hot car. Even on a mild day (75-80 degrees F), the temperature inside a car can raise up to 130 degrees rather quickly. Leaving a window slightly open will not prevent heat buildup. Leaving a dog in a car on a warm day is a risk to the dog's life. Remember this saying - "Cars can kill in warm weather".

There are many variables in triggering a dog to experience heat exhaustion; the dog's physical condition, its age, its coat length, its breed, and its climatization to heat. An older, couch-potato, "snuggle the air conditioner" dog will have less tolerance to the heat than a young, romp outside all day, adolescent. Both the very young and very old dogs are among the highest risk categories. All Frenchies, no matter how well they breathe, or how active they are, are at risk from Heat Stroke.  
  
The first signs of heat exhaustion:   
a) Excessive panting   
b) The skin on the inside of the ears becomes flushed and red.   
Heat Exhaustion can progress in to Heat Stroke, as indicated by :   
a) Weakness   
b) Staggering   
c) Fainting - loss of consciousness

Heat stroke is an emergency situation. If your dog shows signs of heat stroke, you must cool him down as rapidly as possible. Don't wait for veterinary treatment. Heat Stroke is an Emergency - Treat the dog NOW!

DO NOT try to force your dog to drink. His swelling airways can cause any liquid he takes in to be regurgitated and possibly aspirated into his lungs.

Hose the dog down with cool water - not cold.

Apply an ice pack to the dog's head, and soaked towels or any other form of fabric to their body.

If at all possible, get him into a tub of cool water -- again, cool - not cold! However, in an extreme emergency if cold is all there is, use it.

If none of this is working, a cool water enema can help to cool the dog internally. Be careful not to induce to rapidly, or with water cooler than a few degrees below body temp, or you can put your dog into serious shock.

As your dog is panting, his airways are swelling, causing him to pant harder yet again. You need to break this cycle. Children's allergy treatment Benadryl can be administered by mouth from dropper. Consult your vet in advance, or by phone is necessary, for exact dosage. Better still is to obtain a supply of injectible Benadryl to keep on hand.

Do not stop treatment until your dog's body temperature is approaching normal. As soon as the dog's internal temperature has stabilized at a near normal level transport the dog to your vet. Heat stroke can leave permanent damage. NONE of the above treatments are substitutions for veterinary care -- whenever possible, do them enroute to the very closest veterinary clinic.

Many dogs will play until they drop. You must supervise the games, and determine when it is time to stop. During hot weather limit your dog's time outside. Be sure that there is a shaded area for your dog to rest in and that your dog has a constant supply of clean water.

Never, EVER underestimate your dog's susceptibility to heat stroke. Limit their exposure to temperatures which you might personally find only mildly hot, be conscious of your dog's proximity to hot pavement, NEVER leave your Frenchie in a locked car in even warm weather, and always allow them lots of access to fresh water, shade, and cool areas to escape from heat.

**Prevention and Preparation**

Of course, the main weapon in prevention of heat stroke is common sense. As we outlined above, be alert to your dog's actions and responses, and be aware of the fact that what may seem like temperate weather for you may be entirely too hot for your dog. Limit activities in hot weather, avoid contact with pavement and concrete, and provide access to shade, fresh water and cooler areas indoors.

There are several good cool coats and cool packs on the market to help your dog maintain a lower body temperature. Dogs 'n' More carries a full line of cool bandanas, coats, wraps, mats and collars, all made with an absorbent nontoxic polymer crystals that can stay cool for days without needing refrigeration. [**Take a look**](http://www.dogsnmore.com/dogcoats.htm) at their selection for more information.

With very little sewing skill, some Velcro, and a terry cloth towel, you can fashion your own dog's cool coat, in whatever size or color suits you both the best. This [**excellent web page**](http://www.greyhoundmanor.com/pat/cool/coolpat.htm) from GreyHound Manor gives you designs for several easy to make versions. Sew up a few extra while you're at it, and send them to the [FBRN Rescue Mall](http://www.frenchbulldogrescue.org).

We carry a warm weather emergency kit with the following items:

\* bottle of distilled water  
\* disposable enema kit  
\* cool down coat  
\* cool down cloth  
\* towels  
\* children's Benadryl

It's fairly easy to keep a small duffel or travel bag packed with items in the trunk of your car, or on your person. At the very least, it is much better than the alternatives.

Remember, your Frenchie counts on you to keep him safe in summer weather. It can take only a few moments for something to go wrong - or you can take a few moments to prevent it.