



Preventing Heat Stress in Dogs and Humans

Objective: Prepare your team for the challenges of peak season and keeping everyone healthy and safe during the hot summer months.

Content: Summertime brings many new clients and furry friends, but these months also bring new challenges. In most areas, heat will present an added layer of complexity to the day. In addition, you may be working with quite a few new or temporary employees. This Lunch & Learn is designed to facilitate discussion on keeping everyone safe and healthy during this busier time when there will be more distractions and challenges present than any other time of the year. Implementing specific heat advisory procedures and staff training will help keep everyone happy and healthy this summer.

Prior to Lunch & Learn Session:

- In preparation for leading the group discussion, the leader should review the information provided in the supporting materials section found below.
- Print the Heat Stress Play Yard Safety Tips (see below). Cut each topic into individual strips and put into a jar or basket. Determine how each step will be accomplished at your pet care center.
- Print a few copies of the Heat Index Chart you use in your center to be shared during the L & L and posted afterwards. If you don't have one, you can view a sample provided by one of The Dog Gurus members [here](#)).
- Review the [Periodic Dog Check](#) handout to assist with demo and facilitate discussion.

During Lunch & Learn Session:

- Open with your thoughts on why this topic is so important.
- Pass around the jar of Heat Stress Play Yard Safety Tips and have a team member choose one and read aloud. After each strip is read, have a discussion on how each step can be accomplished in your center.
- Share Heat Index Chart and show employees how to read it.
- Finish by demonstrating a live periodic dog check on a pet in your center. The first six check points can be performed. Then, discuss how you will monitor the final three check points.

Other things to consider regarding heat:

- Print and post the [Heat Stress Prevention for Humans](#) in the breakroom. Have each team member initial once read to ensure compliance.
- Update daily checklists to include special steps to be taken in the summer months for heat safety.
- Assign Heat Safety Ambassador titles to a few members of your team. These team members will be responsible for positing temperatures and doing checks during

extreme heat to ensure protocols are being followed. Make sure they know to check on human safety too!

- Keep a supply of inexpensive popsicles and other cool treats in the freezer for your team to keep cool and stay happy! (If you share pics of your staff enjoying these treats on your social media, your customers may begin to take care of this task for you!)
- Share the heat safety tips with clients so they also keep their pets safe at home. Your clients will appreciate the knowledge and care offered as a pet care professional.

Supporting Education Articles/Tools: The articles listed and linked below provide additional information on the topic and can be introduced either before or after the meeting:

Heat Stress Prevention for Humans
<https://www.thedoggurus.com/heat-stress/>

Periodic Dog Check
<http://thedoggurus.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Periodic-Dog-Check-FINAL.pdf>

Heat Stress Play Yard Safety Tips

Provide shade covers and water. Shade covers alone can reduce the temperature by 10 degrees. Providing water in all outside areas will allow pets to hydrate when they need to. Remember to change the water frequently during hot days or add ice to help cool the drinking water temperature.

Heat index information. Monitor the amount of time dogs spend outside compared to inside. Have a weather station for your facility and every hour post the temperature and % humidity for all staff members to see. The attendants of off-leash play groups should refer to a heat index chart to know how long the pets can play outside. Exposure to direct sunlight can increase values up to 15 degrees.

Do an hourly recall with all pets in off-leash play groups. This should be more than just counting noses. The attendant physically touches each pet and visually looks them over. This is a good practice to ensure no injuries have occurred during play, all dogs are accounted for and great practice of staff leadership skills. This will also ensure you are intentionally checking for the behavioral health of each dog during hot weather to notice any early warning signs of possible heat-related problems. *We will review the periodic dog check steps at the end of this Lunch & Learn.

Know the Breeds. There are additional health risks of brachycephalic dogs, “pushed in” faced dogs such as Pug, Boston Terrier, Pekingese, Boxer, Bulldog, Shih Tzu. These breeds can have breathing issues and as a result over-heat more quickly than other breeds. Careful monitoring of these breeds is critical even during moderate heat.

Talk with pet parents. Before the pet stays in our facility, we should find out how often the pet is outside at home. Are they a pet who spends most of their time inside on the sofa or do they exercise and play outside often? Just as with people, dogs that are not acclimated to weather extremes at home will have a harder time with them at your facility. Minimize time outside for pets that spend majority of their time at home in climate-controlled space.

Reduce the length of individual playtimes. During high heat periods provide multiple shorter play sessions instead of one long playtime. Do outside playtimes during early morning or late evening hours, when temperatures are milder. If space is available, do playtimes indoors during high heat periods.

Monitor dogs in grooming. Although this area is not usually affected by outside temperatures, the grooming area is a high-risk area for heat exhaustion. The combination of the drying process and potential stress levels of a pet can elevate their body temperature. Cage-type dryers should not have a heating element; they should only blow room temperature air. Use a timer on the drying unit that shuts it off automatically. Even with automatic shut off, use a kitchen timer set to 10 minutes so you can check on the pet at regular intervals.

Good ventilation in pet enclosure areas. For indoor areas, ensure fresh air is provided, either by means of windows, doors, vents or air conditioning. The facility should always have a method in place for providing fresh air inducted. Room temperatures in indoor animal areas should be maintained between 60°F and 80°F at the level of the pet.
