

Heat, Heart & Hearth
ALTERNATIVE VETERINARY MEDICINE CENTRE

Article WS121/07

Christopher Day - Veterinary Surgeon

Copyright © 2007 AVMC

Chinham House, Stanford in the Vale, Oxon SN7 8NQ UK

01367 710324

This is a page from www.alternativevet.org

HEAT, HEART & HEARTH

Isn't language strange? How can the process of adding one letter, twice, give three different but connected words? As I write, I am hoping for a glorious summer. We each hanker after strawberries, Wimbledon, garden fêtes, summer holidays, balmy evenings, barbecues (even vegetarians enjoy veggie barbecues!), long days, shorts, beaches, boats, bikinis or some such thing, associated with summer and, hopefully, summer sunshine. That's our stereotype of summer. We British are ever the optimists, despite the reality of many poor summers. That's good.

It isn't all wine and roses for our animals, though. Yes, they enjoy the long days, the better walking, the fun in the garden, the swimming and the other summer things. They enjoy our lighter spirits, bringing more happiness into the home. Unless we've had an old dog, a thick-coated breed or a sick dog, however, we may not be sensitive to the toll summer weather can take. The great sadness to me is the number of older patients, to whom I have eventually had to wish *bon voyage*, in summer heat. Older dogs don't seem to be able to handle heat so well. Constant heat puts a strain on temperature control mechanisms that may be 'tired' in older dogs. Many old dogs have a degree of laryngeal paralysis, limiting the cooling airflow over the tongue and through the lungs, that is the dog's main means of heat dissipation and why he pants in the heat.

If a dog has a heart problem, summer heat is a serious enemy, which can wreck the balance of effective medical régimes in a matter of hours. Heart failure can be a very rapid affair, under hot summer conditions. Even a younger dog, that may or may not have shown symptoms of difficulties before, can fall ill with heat stress or heat stroke. It is not the sole prerogative of canine pensioners.

Heat, Heart & Hearth - AVMC

What can we do to treat or to avoid such problems? Heat stress or even heat stroke can respond wonderfully to [Homeopathy](#). Homeopathic *Aconitum* and *Glonoinium* are very helpful in such cases. The latter is a heart medicine too, so can be doubly beneficial in heart cases. *Digitalis* is also useful in balancing and improving heart function. *Carbo veg.* is invaluable when there is air hunger and danger of collapse. *Natrum mur.* helps with dehydration from sun exposure. *Natrum carb.* and *Sulphur* suit dogs that are very intolerant of heat, even in health. [Bach's Rescue Remedy](#) is a good general emergency medicine.

[Herbs](#) may be useful. I once had a terrier patient who used to gorge on *Pellitory of the Wall*, when visiting us on hot days. This is a 'cooling' herb! Who says that zoopharmacognosy (self-selection of herbal medicine) doesn't occur? (see picture)



Air-conditioning in the house or car, is an obviously helpful luxury, not available to many households in the UK. We have so little heat-wave weather (or blizzards for that matter) that we are never prepared for climatic extremes. Long, hot car journeys are to be avoided. It may be fine with the car in motion and a window open. Traffic jams, however, are not so rare as to be unexpected in our crowded island, so the car may well be motionless for some time. That is when things can turn very nasty for a dog. If a car journey is necessary in sunny weather, take a cool box, with a towel in it, which has been soaked then frozen. This is a wonderful cooling blanket, should heat stress become evident. It can be put over a dog or rolled up alongside him or her.

Of course, no one leaves dogs in parked cars, in sunshine. Even if it appears cool or dull outside, a car can act as a hothouse, putting an occupant into severe heat stress in minutes. Leaving a window ajar is rarely sufficient to allay these fears.

Electric fans, in car or home, can be a boon on the stuffiest days. 'Close' weather can be very hard on dogs.

Allow a dog the run of the house, if left at home. He can choose the coolest room. Don't take dogs for walks in the heat of the day. Don't get them excited or too playful, especially with balls. They will self-destruct, rather than yield to the challenge. Swimming can be very cooling.

Heat, Heart & Hearth - AVMC

Allowing constant access to fresh drinking water is clearly sound practice. Observe your dog's behaviour. If he enjoys a flagstone floor, allow him access to it in the heat. An old stone hearth can be wonderfully cool, along with a pleasant draught from the chimney (there, we managed to work hearth in somehow!).

Above all, use common sense and seek help promptly, if in trouble. Delay can be fatal.

Written by Christopher Day – July 2001

To return to the web site of the AVMC, click the 'BACK' button of your browser or click www.alternativevet.org

This site is subject to frequent ongoing development and expansion - please revisit to view new material

