

HEAT STRESS

What is heat stress?

Heat stress occurs when a greyhound's body temperature rises to dangerous levels and their natural cooling methods are no longer effective. If untreated, heat stress can progress to heat stroke, a potentially life-threatening condition caused by extreme increases in body temperature.

Greyhounds mostly release heat by panting, with only a small amount of sweating through their paw pads and nose. When panting is not enough to cool the body, heat stress develops. If a greyhound's temperature reaches 41°C, serious organ damage or death may occur.



Why greyhounds are at risk

Greyhounds have very little body fat and thin skin, making it harder for them to regulate their body temperature compared to other breeds of dog. This makes them more vulnerable to both cold in winter and heat stress during warmer months.

Unlike humans, who primarily cool down by sweating, dogs rely on panting to lose heat through evaporation from their mucous membranes and lungs. When this process fails, heat stress sets in and can quickly escalate to heat stroke if not addressed promptly.

What are the signs of heat stress?

Watch for these symptoms indicating your greyhound may be suffering from heat stress:

- Excessive or heavy panting
- Hyperventilation (deep, rapid breathing)
- Increased heart rate
- Increased salivation and drooling, followed by drying of the gums and mucous membranes (tongue and gums may appear bright red)
- Weakness or lethargy
- Agitation, whining, barking, or other signs of stress and anxiety
- Vomiting or diarrhea, which may be bloody

If untreated, heat stress can progress to heat stroke, causing your dog to become listless, collapse, have difficulty breathing, or experience seizures.

How can you prevent heat stress?

Keep your greyhound safe during hot weather with these practical tips:

- Avoid exercising your greyhound during the hottest parts of the day. Walk in the early mornings or evenings when temperatures are cooler and shade is available.
- Always check pavement temperature before walks, the pavement can remain dangerously hot even after air temperature drops. Consider protective boots if needed.
- Never leave your greyhound unattended in a car, even during winter.
- Provide access to paddle pools placed in shaded areas to keep water cool.
- Offer frozen treats or add ice cubes to their water to help keep them hydrated and cool.
- Air conditioning is ideal on hot days. If your greyhound is outside, ensure constant access to shaded, well-ventilated areas and fresh, cool water.
- Use cooling mats or wet towels for your greyhound to lie on.

What to do if your greyhound shows signs of heat stress

If you notice signs of heat stress, act quickly:

- Move your dog to a shaded or air-conditioned area with good airflow.
- Gently wipe your greyhound with a cool, damp towel.
- Do not lay a wet towel over your dog, as this can trap heat and slow cooling.
- Hose your dog down with cool (not cold) water, focusing on the feet, chest, back, and groin.
- Avoid using ice-cold water on their body, as it can constrict blood vessels and slow cooling. Ice packs can be safely applied to the feet and covered ice packs placed between thighs and armpits.
- Monitor your greyhound's temperature and behaviour closely. If their temperature does not decrease, or if they begin vomiting, have diarrhoea, or show signs of heat stroke, seek veterinary care immediately.

Remember: Early recognition and prompt action can save your greyhound's life. Stay vigilant, especially during warm weather, and keep your companion safe and comfortable.

