

HEAT STROKE IN CATS: RECOGNITION AND RESPONSE



Article checked by a vet

Cat heat stroke is a very serious condition. If you think your cat might have heat stroke, it’s vital to quickly cool it down by yourself at home and take it straight to a vet. The faster a cat is cooled down and the sooner it gets to a vet, the better its chances of recovery.

Work steadily and methodically to avoid stressing your cat. Here’s what to do:

1. Move your cat into a cool, shady location.
2. Slowly and gently pour cool water (from the cold tap) over your cat’s whole body, making sure you don’t get any in its nose or mouth. Do not use very cold water.
3. Put them on top of a cool, soaking wet towel.
4. Increase airflow by opening doors or windows, or by turning on a fan.
5. Offer them water to drink without forcing them to drink.
6. Wrap ice, a bag of frozen vegetables or another frozen item in a towel and place it

between your cat’s hind legs.

Do not cover your cat with anything (including wet towels) and avoid touching it.

As soon as you have done this, take your cat straight to your vet. Call them first to confirm. Make sure you transport your cat with the air conditioning on or your windows open.

If you are unsure about what to do at any stage, contact your vet.

About cat heat stroke

Heat stroke in cats is a very serious condition that can be fatal or cause long term health problems.

Cats normally regulate their body temperature in hot weather by finding cool, shady locations. Most cases of heat stroke happen when a cat gets trapped somewhere hot and poorly ventilated, like a car, shed or greenhouse. Otherwise, some cats can get heat stroke because they’re vulnerable to it. Some cats that are vulnerable to heat stroke are cats with long coats, brachycephalic (flat-faced) cats and cats that have health conditions.

In this article, we’ll help cat owners understand heat stroke. First, we’ll explain how cats get heat stroke and what the signs of heat stroke are. After that, we’ll explain how to prevent it from happening in the first place. Finally, all cats suspected of having had heat stroke should be taken to a vet, and so we’ll also explain how vets treat heat stroke.

Find out why your cat keeps sneezing(open in new tab).

How do cats get heat stroke?

Heatstroke in cats normally happens when a cat gets trapped somewhere dangerously hot.

Cats primarily regulate their temperature by choosing a cool location. They can cool themselves naturally to some extent, such as by sweating and licking themselves. However, they really need to stay in a cool environment. If a cat gets stuck somewhere hot, it can quickly start to overheat.

Some hot places cats might end up getting stuck are:

- Cars
- Conservatories
- Sheds
- Greenhouses
- Garages

As well as being trapped in hot locations, there are other reasons a cat might get heat stroke. Environmental factors like humidity and lack of shade also contribute. Cats also need access to clean water, and it’s important they have airflow around them in hot weather.

Some cats are also more vulnerable to heat stroke:

- Overweight cats
- Cats with long fur
- Old and young cats
- Brachycephalic (flat-faced) cats
- Cats with underlying health conditions

‘Can cats get heat stroke’ is a common online search phrase, which shows that many people aren’t even aware that, yes, cats can get heat stroke.

Signs of heat stroke in cats

Heatstroke in cats is a very serious health condition that can not only quickly become fatal but also cause long term health issues. As such, cat owners should understand how to spot the signs of it.

Early recognition is also key. What starts as mild heat stress can quickly turn into life-threatening heat stroke.

One of the earliest warning signs of distress in a cat is when it starts meowing more than normal(open in new tab).

Early signs (heat exhaustion)

Heat exhaustion is an earlier stage in the overheating process. While it is less serious than heat stroke, it is still a serious health problem that requires immediate intervention.

Here are some signs a cat might have heat exhaustion:

- Seeking cool locations
- Increased thirst
- Increased licking and grooming
- Panting / rapid and shallow respiration
- Drooling
- Sweaty paws
- Vocalisation - making a sound that indicates distress

If you think your cat might have heat exhaustion, you should immediately take action to cool it down. Following this, you should also take it straight to a vet for a checkup.

Critical signs (heat stroke)

Cat heat stroke is a very serious health condition. If you think your cat might have heat stroke, it’s very important to take immediate action to cool it down and take it straight to a vet. As well as being dangerous in the short term, heat stroke can cause long term health problems.

Here are the signs of heatstroke in cats:

- Panting or irregular breathing
- Drooling or salivating
- Agitation
- Bright red gums or tongue (or pale gums)
- Vomiting or diarrhoea (may contain blood)
- Weakness or collapsing
- Confusion
- Dizziness and poor gait
- Muscle tremors or seizures
- Blindness
- Unconsciousness/coma

Preventing heat stroke in cats

Of course, the best thing is to stop your cat from being at risk of heat stroke in the first place.

As we said, most cases of cat heat stroke happen when a cat gets stuck somewhere too hot. Often, they go into a warm place to sleep, but get stuck when someone shuts the door.

Always make sure you check warm environments, like cars, greenhouses or conservatories, for your cat before you close the door.

Otherwise, you might want to take permanent measures like fitting a cat flap or removing the door.

Make sure the environment your cat normally lives in is also cool enough for it. All cats need to have a cool environment in which they can regulate their body temperature. Here are some tips:

- Provide shade
- Make sure there is airflow – cats expel heat through their breath, and they need airflow for this to work
- Make sure your cat has plenty of fresh, clean water – several bowls in different locations throughout the home are best
- Brush dense coats
- Keep your cat healthy and at a good weight
- Consider providing cool mats, ice water fountains or other things that help your cat stay cool

Some other important things to remember are:

- Never leave a cat in a car
- Limit car travel in warm weather
- Do not use crates or boxes in warm weather

Veterinary treatment & recovery timeline

It’s very important to make sure you take your cat to the vet if you think it has or has had heat stroke. Quick treatment is highly important for recovery.

In an emergency, you should take the steps outlined at the top of this article and then take your cat straight to the vet. If you suspect your cat may have had heat stroke in the recent past, you should also take it to the vet.

Heat stroke isn’t just dangerous in the short term. It can also cause long term health problems, which might show up days after the cat has recovered from the initial overheating.

Here are some things a vet might do to treat a cat that is overheating:

- Cool it down using water, fans, ice packs, or IV drips
- Use other cooling methods, such as cooling enemas
- Treat cats that are struggling to breathe, having seizures or unconscious with supplemental oxygen, anaesthesia, intubation or other treatments

After a cat has recovered from the initial heat stroke, it may need further treatment. This could mean an extended stay at the vets.

Here are some possible treatments:

- Blood tests (often to screen for liver or kidney injury)
- Antibiotics and other medications
- Ongoing monitoring and treatment

Cats that have a mild case of heat stroke and are treated quickly are likely to make a full recovery. However, cats that have overheated for a long time or received delayed treatment can become very unwell, suffer lasting damage to their health or even die.

The faster a cat with heatstroke is cooled down and taken to a vet, the better its chances of recovery.

Another less serious health issue to be aware of in the summer months is hay fever in cats(open in new tab).

Heat stroke in cats FAQs

All Questions Heat stroke in cats
Filter by

- All Questions
- Heat stroke in cats

1. **How do you know if your cat had a heat stroke?**

   Some signs of heat stroke are panting or irregular breathing, drooling or salivating, agitation, bright red gums or tongue, vomiting or diarrhoea, weakness, confusion, dizziness and poor gait, muscle tremors or seizures, blindness, unconsciousness/coma. Heat stroke is a very serious health condition for cats.

Meanwhile, the search term ‘can cats get heat stroke’ is relatively popular, highlighting the lack of awareness of the issue.

2. **How long does it take a cat to recover from heat exhaustion?**

   The amount of time it takes for a cat to recover from heat exhaustion depends on how severely and for how long they have been overheating. It also depends on how quickly they are cooled down and taken to a vet. Recovery can be as fast as a few days in mild cases. Severe cases can mean a slow recovery or lasting health damage.

3. **How long before heat stroke symptoms appear?**

   The amount of time it takes for a cat to develop heat strokes depends on the condition of the cat and the excess temperatures it’s exposed to. Some cats are more vulnerable to heat stroke and may develop it more quickly. Be aware that heat stroke can happen quickly in some cases.

4. **Can heat cause vomiting?**

   Yes, heat can cause vomiting in cats, and it is a sign that there’s a serious problem. Vomiting is a sign of heatstroke in cats, which is a serious health condition that requires urgent attention. Some other signs of heatstroke in cats include panting or irregular breathing, drooling, agitation, bright red gums or tongue (or pale gums), weakness or collapsing and confusion.

SEE ALL POPULAR ARTICLES

Source URL: *https://www.perfect-fit.co.uk/cat-advice/health/heat-stroke-in-cats*