

Looking after your dog on a hot day

In summer, temperatures can really heat up in Australia. Many of us work in air-conditioned offices, or if we do have to work outside, we have rules in place to ensure our safety. Our dogs often have limited choices when we are at work during summer and may swelter in the heat until we return home. So what can you do to make your dog's life more pleasant during hot summer days?

Grooming

Ensure you groom out your dog's winter coat – this is especially important for double-coated breeds and those with thicker coats. The thinner their undercoat, the cooler your dog will be.



Shade

Provide several areas of shade for your dog in the yard. As the sun moves over your yard throughout the day, shady areas will change throughout your yard. Ensure your dog always has shaded areas regardless of where the sun is. Trees, buildings, and pergolas all provide shade, so check next time you are home to ensure there is shade in your yard.



Air-conditioning and cooling

If your dog is indoors when you are out, keep the house cool using air-conditioning or evaporative cooling. Keep blinds, shutters or curtains closed, and keep doors and windows closed to keep cool air in and hot air out. Check and top up the insulation of your roof.

Feeding

Make changes to your dog's diet. In summer decrease their food intake as energy needs are less. Check your dog's body condition – if your dog is the correct weight, you should be able to feel all ribs clearly with only a thin covering of fat. If you can't feel your dog's ribs, now is the time to put your dog on a diet, as reducing body fat will help keep your dog cooler.

Water

Provide access to multiple water sources. The sun quickly heats an exposed water bowl, or your dog may knock it over or drink it all. Provide at least 2–3 bowls or water sources.

Check your local pet supplies store – some bowls have compartments in the rim where you can freeze water to make the bowl's contents stay cooler longer.



Freeze water overnight and place the large frozen blocks into the water bowl to keep the water cool for the whole day.

Make flavoured ice blocks as enrichment activities, and to keep your dog cool – try tuna, gravy, pet milk or meat stock ice blocks.

Exercise

Be smart about exercise – only walk your dog early morning or in the evening when the temperatures are lower.

Take water on your walks for your dog to drink.

Don't walk in full sun or on the bitumen road as your dog will quickly overheat and potentially burn their footpads. While you have shoes to absorb the heat, your dog's pads will absorb the heat from the road leading to rapid overheating. Walk on cool grass instead.

Water play

Place a filled wading pool in a shaded area. Plastic pools are best as they are more durable and easy to clean.



Take your dog swimming at your designated local off-leash beach, dam or river. Be snake aware when near sources of fresh water.



If your dog isn't a swimmer, allow them to wade in and cool their feet. Don't force them to swim; instead, allow them to discover how refreshing the cool water is in their own time.

An ice pack, cooling mat or wet towel to lay on

This tip is as simple as it sounds. Offering an ice pack, cooling mat or a wet towel to your pet will help to lower their body temperature when it's hot outside.

Use an ice pack wrapped in a blanket to put in your dog's bed or place of rest to help your dog cool down and relax on a hot summer's day.

Cooling mats can be filled with cold tap water, ice packs that you may have to freeze overnight or cooling gel. They work best when laid on the ground for your dog to sit or lay on.

While wet towels work best when they're drenched in cool water or draped over your dog. This even works for dogs who have longer coats!

Use a cooling collar or vest

Cooling collars and vests are similar to cooling mats. They are filled with a special cooling gel and are designed to keep your dog's body cool for a few hours.

There are also cooling vests that aim to move heat from your dog's body to the environment. These types of coats should be regularly doused in water. As the water evaporates this helps to cool down your dog.



Cooling vests are a great option when walking or hiking with dogs on warmer days. However, it's still important that you take all necessary precautions when keeping your dog cool on very hot days.

Car travel

Car travel – never leave your dog unattended in a vehicle during the summer months, even with the windows down. Cars heat up quickly and reach deadly temperatures within 1–5 minutes. It is better to leave your dog at home than to take them for a drive to the shops on a warm or hot day.

If you're looking to take your dog on a road trip or start travelling with pets in the car this summer then here are some handy tips:

- Keep the air conditioning on when driving with your dog and when you are in a parked car with your dog
- Don't park in direct sunlight with your dog in the car
- Cars can reach over 70°C on a hot summer's day
- Dogs can overheat even when the windows are down or the car is parked in a shaded area
- Ute trays can burn your dog's footpads or bodies
- Keep an eye on your dog for signs of heatstroke i.e. panting, salivating, discomfort, or disorientation.