

HOW TO COOL HOT DOGS

Heat-related illness (commonly referred to as **heatstroke**) is a potentially **fatal** condition which can occur in dogs during or after exercise, or when exposed to hot temperatures or environmental conditions. The longer the dog's **temperature** remains **high**, the **more damage is likely** to happen.

Early and rapid decrease of body temperature in overheated dogs can reduce damage levels, speed recovery and save lives.

Two recent studies investigated cooling methods used by owners and veterinary professionals for managing hot dogs in the UK. The key findings are reviewed here.

COOL FIRST, TRANSPORT SECOND

The cooling methods used on dogs at canine sports (canicross) events were investigated.

Placing a dog in a vehicle **SLOWED** cooling post-exercise. The longer a dog's **temperature** remains **high**, the more **damage** is likely.

If you must transport a hot dog in a vehicle:

1. Cool the dog **before** they enter the vehicle.
2. Cool down the vehicle **before** the dog enters.
3. Ensure air movement over the dog during travel, e.g. **air conditioning** or **open windows**.

COOL USING WATER

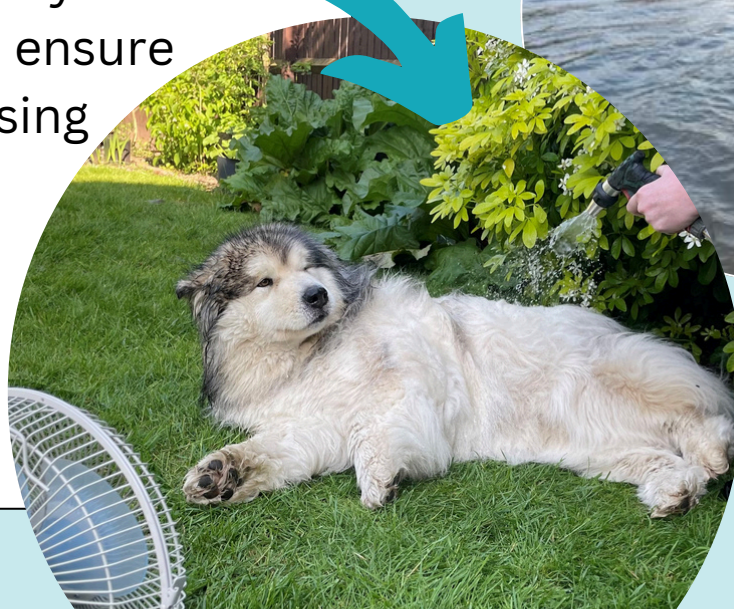
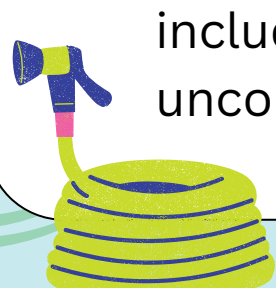
Cold-water immersion was the most effective cooling method for dogs in the study. No damaging effects were seen from cold-water immersion.

Two cooling methods are recommended for dogs:

1. **Immersion in water** for healthy conscious dogs (**cold** is better, but use whatever is most rapidly available, providing it is cooler than the dog).

2. **Evaporative cooling** – spray or pour water on the dog, and ensure **air movement** over them using fans/air conditioning. This can be used on **all dogs**

including older, unconscious or unwell dogs.



Veterinary clinical records were reviewed of over 800 dogs treated for heatstroke in the UK during 2016-2018:

- Only 22% were cooled prior to transportation
- Just 24% were cooled used water

Delaying cooling and/or using ineffective cooling methods can substantially reduce the dog's chance of survival.

TAKE HOME MESSAGES:

If you are concerned your dog is **overheating** or is at risk of overheating:

1. **Cool First, Transport Second**
2. **Cool Using Water**

Seek **veterinary advice immediately** if your dog develops signs of **heatstroke**, such as excessive panting, reluctance to move and collapse.

Previous advice to “cool slowly” and only use “lukewarm or tepid” water **is a myth**. Don't let outdated messages delay any dog's treatment. **Rapid cooling saves lives.**

To read the original studies click the links below:

[Post-exercise management of exertional hyperthermia in dogs participating in dog sport \(canicross\) events in the UK](#)

[Cooling Methods Used to Manage Heat-Related Illness in Dogs Presented to Primary Care Veterinary Practices during 2016–2018 in the UK](#)

RVC VetCompass <https://www.rvc.ac.uk/vetcompass> carries out welfare research based on anonymised clinical information shared from over 30% of UK veterinary practices. We are very grateful to the owners and veterinary professionals who contribute to VetCompass research