

Pets suffer heat stroke as mercury climbs

By David Brown
Of the Emerald

Imagine being locked in a sauna wearing a fur coat while waiting for a friend to return from the store or a class. That situation occurs more often than might be expected.

Every spring and summer, pets left in locked cars suffer heat stroke simply because their owners are careless or thoughtless, according to authorities from the American Animal Hospital Association.

"Many pet owners fail to realize that the temperature inside their autos can easily climb to 120 degrees (F)," says Donald McCoy, Oregon area director for the association. The midsoles melted when he left a pair of Nike running shoes in his car's trunk once, he says.

When the thermometer reaches temperatures over 60 degrees, a pet should not be left in the car, McCoy says.

"At 70 degrees the temperature inside can get up to 100."

Dogs and cats do not perspire in a manner like people, but rather salivate and pant to cool themselves. This can lead to hyperventilation and dehydration in any dog or cat. Excessive heat also produces stress and muscle contractions which further build up body temperatures.

Pets with heart conditions, and very young, obese, or sick pets are most susceptible to the heat. Short-snouted dogs are more likely to suffer heat stroke because they have a harder time breathing, which makes it harder to cool off.

Officers of Eugene's Tri-Agency Animal Regulation leave a leaflet on vehicles containing pets that do not appear in immediate danger, says Elaine Cole of Tri-Agency. While being interviewed by the Emerald, Cole received a report of a dog locked in the cab of a pick-up and dispatched an officer to the scene.

The leaflet, titled "Your Dog May Be Dying," is published by the Animal Protection Institute of Sacramento, Calif. It explains that a closed car can interfere with a dog's normal cooling

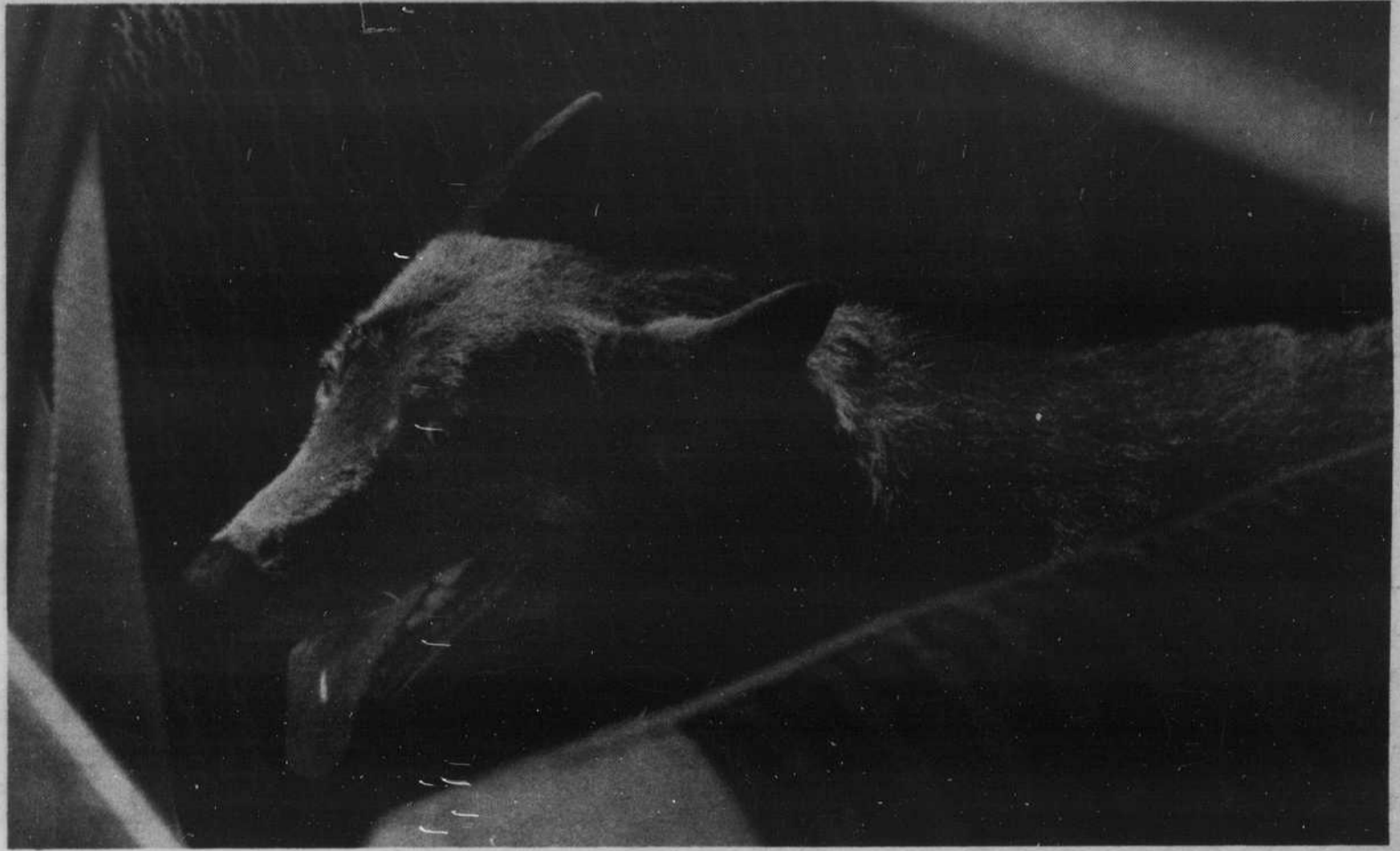


Photo by Erich Boekelheide

Pet owners should be careful not to leave their pets trapped in cars that can turn into ovens during sunny days.

process, evaporation through panting.

The sheet says a dog can withstand body temperatures four or five degrees above normal for only a short time before suffering brain damage or death. A dog's normal body temperature is 101.5 to 102 degrees.

The signs of heat stroke are:

- Restless pacing, trembling and twitching.
- Panting, an increased pulse rate and an anxious or staring expression.
- Frantic pawing or scratching at windows or doors if confined in a vehicle.
- Pale or bluish gums.
- Sometimes frothing at the mouth or vomiting.
- Convulsions, stupor or coma may

follow.

If your pet gets heat stroke, McCoy advises, first try to lower its body temperature as fast as possible by immersing it in cool water, or spraying it with a hose. Owners should keep the animal in shade, preferably where there is a breeze.

Once cooling has begun, skin massage and flexing of the legs helps to increase circulation, which in turn helps to dissipate the heat. A pet victimized by heat stroke should be checked by a veterinarian as soon as possible, and additional treatment may be needed.

To prevent heat stroke, never leave a dog or cat in a closed car for any length of time on a summer day, or even a

cloudy day, McCoy says. Heat may still gradually build up without sun and bright winter days can still cause surprising heat in a car, he says.

If no other choice exists, park the car in a well shaded area with all the windows and vents opened as widely as possible — while still preventing your pet from escaping. Don't forget to check the car every 15 minutes because shade disappears faster than most people realize. Lastly, be sure to provide the animal with some drinking water.

"We understand you meant to be kind in taking your dog with you today," the leaflet says. "But you could be risking his life."

Heard about the Cervical Cap?

The Cervical Cap is used as a barrier method of birth control. It is a thimble shaped cap made out of rubber which fits tightly over the neck of the cervix, preventing sperm from entering the uterus. The cap was used in this country years ago, but has not gained popularity until recently.



It has been used for years successfully in Western Europe. At this time the cervical cap is not approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Studies are being done to determine its current effectiveness and safety.

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