

PETS
August 23



The Green Gazette

Avoiding Heat Stress

It's not been the hottest of Julys... but there's still hope for sunnier days. Heat stress can catch you unaware, particularly when pets are left in cars or other enclosed spaces, even on cooler days.

Who's most at risk?

- Short-nosed (brachycephalic) dogs and cats
- Long-haired breeds
- Dark coated animals
- Very young or very old
- Naturally high energy or anxious
- Have underlying conditions such as heart or lung disease

What are the signs of heat stroke?

- Excessive panting or difficulty breathing
- Drooling
- Bright red gums
- Anxiety or agitation
- Excessive drinking
- Vomiting or diarrhoea
- Weakness, seeming dazed or confused
- Collapse or seizure

How do I prevent it?

- Never leave your pet unattended in the car on a warm or sunny day, even if the air temperature feels fairly cool. A cracked window is not enough and sadly, **pets really do die in hot cars.**
- Get your long-haired pets clipped and groomed in the summer to reduce extra insulation from their coats.
- Leave your dog at home on really hot days. They'll be much happier chilling out in the cool than burning their paws out and about
- On hot days, walk your dog first thing in the morning and/or late at night. Try to keep pets inside and somewhere cool during the hottest part of the day.

Dog and Cat food

Did you know we can supply dog and cat food from Royal Canin, Hill's, Virbac and Calibra? What you probably don't know is that our prices are often equal to or *less than* online suppliers (we've checked!) meaning you could save money and support your local, independent vet practice, all at the same time! Ask us for a price for your favourite food and see how we compare.

If you, or your pet, aren't happy with the food they're eating, get in touch and we'll be able to recommend a diet that fits your needs.

- Make sure your pet has plenty of water available to drink.

What do I do if my pet shows signs of heat stroke?

- Place them somewhere cool, with fans or air conditioning
- Wrap them in cool, wet towels or place towel-wrapped ice packs against them
- Splash or spray them with cool water
- Offer water to drink

Symptoms should improve within 5 minutes. If they don't or are particularly severe, call your vet immediately.

Fear Free Nail Clipping

Nail trims can be stressful. For you and your dog. But they don't have to be that way. Desensitising your dog to nail clipping at home can turn nail clipping into a positive and consensual activity. Even if you still bring your dog to us for its nail clips, working on this at home can massively cut down on your dog's stress levels.

The basic process of desensitisation involves breaking a scary and overwhelming task or event (like nail clipping) into small, manageable steps. Then, we make sure that our dog can cope with each step without feeling any stress, before moving onto the next one. During each step we give lots of treats and praise to make the whole experience a positive one.

You will need:

- Your dog
- Nail clippers
- A non-slip surface.
- A calm and quiet environment to train in
- Lots of small, quick to eat treats

Other signs of stress include: looking sideways or showing the whites of their eyes, trembling, and tucking their tail under their body.

The steps (to be followed over several sessions):

- **The environment-** Lead your dog to the non-slip surface and give them treats and praise. If they are showing no signs of stress, move onto the next step.
- **Seeing the clippers-** Let your dog sniff and investigate the nail clippers. Give treats while the clippers are out. When the clippers go away, the treats stop. If your dog is showing no signs of stress, move onto the next step.
- **Hearing the clipping-** Clip a piece of dry pasta near your dog's nail. Then give a treat. If your dog shows signs of stress, take a break and next time start with the pasta further away from your dog. Once your dog is comfortable with the sound coming from next to their nail, and you've repeated this several times, move onto the next step.
- **Touching a nail-** Starting up at your dog's shoulder, slide your hand down their leg to touch their paw and nail. Give a treat. If your dog shows signs of stress, take a break and next time only move a short way down their leg, building up to eventually touching the nail when they are comfortable with what comes before. Repeat several times. Once they are comfortable with this, move onto the next step.
- **Squeezing a toe-** Again, starting at the shoulder, slide down to a nail and gently squeeze a toe. Give a treat. If you find clipping nails easier with their foot held in the air, slowly introduce that here and reward them accordingly. Repeat several times. Once they are comfortable with this, move onto the next step.
- **Touching the clippers to a nail-** Starting at the shoulder, slide down to a nail and gently touch the clippers to your dog's nail without actually clipping the nail. Give a treat and repeat several times, advancing to putting the clippers around the nail without cutting it. Once they are comfortable with this, move onto the next step.
- **Clipping a nail-** Once your pet is comfortable with all the previous steps and not showing any signs of stress, try clipping a nail. Immediately give a treat and some praise. If your dog shows no signs of stress, try another nail, giving a treat after every nail. If your dog seems unsure, take a break and next time go back a step or two.

These stages shouldn't all be completed in one sitting- Going **slow** is the key to reducing stress.

You don't have to clip all of the nails in one day. One stress-free nail per day is fine!

The treats don't have to be fancy. Using your dog's usual kibble and replacing a meal fed from a bowl with a training session is a great idea. Dogs love to work for their food.

If at any point in the future your dog starts showing signs of stress while their nails are clipped, go back to the earlier steps and work your way through. You likely won't have to spend as much time re-training- your dog will remember that having their nails clipped is a positive and tasty experience!

