



Bikinis, beach, BBQ's, beers, ballgames and ... Braccy Breeds!!

by Michelle Knight

Our favourite season is upon us. For many people, summer represents everything great about our beautiful country, but, for those of us who own French Bulldogs – or any Brachycephalic breed for that matter - it represents a time for careful management of our beloved canine companions.

As the days get longer and hotter the dangers of heat stroke for our Frenchies is greater. In saying that, any creature is susceptible to the effects of hyperthermia – but, due the anatomical structure of the French Bulldog, the risk is far greater.

Typically, several structural abnormalities in the face of the Frenchie lead to predisposition to heat stress (hyperthermia), such as: stenotic nares (pinched nostrils), elongated soft palate, shorter nasal passages and in extreme cases, everted lateral sacculles of the larynx or enlarged tonsils. Any or all of these abnormalities contribute to narrowing the upper respiratory tract, thereby restricting breathing further. Left untreated, this can lead to collapse should your French bulldog become over-excited and as a result, overheat.

Dogs can't sweat like you and I. A dog's primary method of cooling is evaporative cooling from the respiratory tract through panting. When a dog pants it provides increased air flow over moist surfaces in the upper respiratory tract through rapid, shallow breathing. The increase in air flow causes an increase in evaporation from the upper respiratory tract, thus assists in cooling the body. French bulldogs, being much shorter in foreface, can't cool the air as effectively as their doliocephalic (long nose, think sight hounds) and mesocephalic (medium foreface, think Labrador, Kelpie etc) cousins. As a result, the ambient temperature of the air they are inhaling – let's say it's a 38 degree day – has a shorter distance to cover and therefore is hot air, thus, causing further heating from within. Now, couple this with a narrower respiratory tract, which through excessive panting whilst trying to get as much air in as possible, can lead to further narrowing as oedema builds up in the throat area... Boom, we now have a potentially critical situation.



Hyperthermia – an internal temperature of 39.5 and above. Anything over 40 degrees and you're heading into critical territory. Hyperthermia and heat stress can lead to multiple organ dysfunction – this occurs when heat dissipating mechanisms of the body cannot accommodate excessive external heat and internal organs become compromised. In severe cases, left untreated, hyperthermia can lead to sudden kidney failure, breakdown of red-muscle tissue and death of liver cells. In the most acute and severe of cases, cardiac and respiratory arrest and/or brain damage can occur.

For our busy little Frenchie Friends, the simple act of getting super excited can lead to an overheating episode. Common causes for heat stress can include – excessive environmental heat, confinement in an area with little or no airflow, or as mentioned before, over-excitement or over-exertion. One should also be mindful of all this when transferring our French kids from a lovely icy cool air-conditioned environment to a sudden exposure to heat. For example; from your air-coned car to the hot car-park at the beach. Failing to acclimatise your Frenchie to the sudden change in temperature can shock their little respiratory system. In those circumstances, better to drive the last 5 minutes with the windows opened a little, just to help acclimatise them to the outside temperature.

So, what does all of this mean when it comes to managing our French Bulldogs during the hot summer. One word...**PREVENTION!!!**

Trust me, **managing your Frenchie's environment when you know there is a chance of high external temperatures is the key.** Keeping an eye on the weather forecast can help you plan for those hot days. Make sure your Frenchie has access at all times to plenty of cool, clean drinking water. A well-ventilated cool shaded spot to get out of the heat. A wading pool or clam shell filled with cool, clean water is a must for Frenchie owners. Ideally, a French Bulldog is much better suited to being inside in the air conditioning and if it's going to be a scorcher as in heat wave – nothing else will do.



Another very useful investment for Frenchie owners is a Cool Coat. These are specially designed coats that after being soaked in cold water are placed on to your dog like any other coat. These coats keep your French bulldog cool, but, it is vitally important that the cool coat is kept wet. If it dries out (and it will within an hour or two), it will act as a warming coat...so, these must be used under supervision. Also a great thing to have is a cooling mat. These are specially gel filled mats that require no refrigeration or wetting, they absorb the heat simply as your Frenchie lays or sits on it. They are wonderful. These mats can be ordered online through many online pet stores.



Something I like to do for my Frenchies during summer is make them ice blocks. I do this by filling a simple sandwich bag with the clip lock seal and freezing the contents. Some of the yummy varieties I do are; Simple beef broth, chicken broth, water with chopped fruit (of course only canine suitable fruits should be used) like bananas, strawberries, blueberries, grated apple. Sometimes I simply throw in a small handful of kibble. The dogs have a wonderful time gnawing and licking at their icy treats – searching for the delights buried deep in the ice block. Now, word of warning, this can be a messy affair.

Another good tip for sandwich bags is to simply fill them with water and freeze. They make good ice bricks to submerge in drinking bowls to help keep water cool.



DO's and DON'Ts of managing your Frenchie during summer

DO be prepared for high temperatures this summer.

DO keep an eye on the weather forecasts.

DO provide well-ventilated, cool, shaded areas for your Frenchies to escape the heat.

DO provide plenty of fresh, clean, cool drinking water at all times.

DO provide a clam shell or baby bath filled with cool, clean water for the Frenchies to bath or play in.

DO invest in a Cool Coat or Cooling mat. Please contact The French Bulldog Club of NSW for information into purchasing a custom made Cool Coat for your French Bulldog.

DO bring your Frenchies inside if the temperatures are set to soar.

DON'T leave your Frenchies outside unsupervised during very hot days.

DON'T leave your Frenchies in hot cars.

DON'T expose your Frenchie to sudden changes in environmental temperatures without acclimatising them first.

DON'T allow your Frenchie to over-exert themselves on warm or hot days. They are little buggers and think they can, but, it's up to us to know better.



Signs and Symptoms of Heat Stress and or Heat Stoke

- Noisy, rapid breathing
- Obvious difficulty in breathing
- Disorientation
- Staggering gait (ataxia)
- Vomiting or gagging
- Bright red gums
- Elevated heart rate
- Collapse or coma

Seek urgent medical advice should your Frenchie be displaying any or all of the above symptoms.

DO's and DON'Ts of managing heat stress in an emergency

Should you find yourself in the scary and unfortunate position of having to deal with a heat stress situation, these following steps should be followed:

DO get your dog into a cool environment i.e – inside out of the heat.

Cool/tepid water, **NOT** cold. Do not use cold, cold water or icepacks. Icy cold water or cooling too quickly causes vaso constriction (blood vessels shrink) and in turn effects perfusion to organs due to cardiac restriction. **DO** place your pet into cool/tepid water bath, paying special attention to wetting the head and neck area. Be sure to towel off excess water.

Wet towels to lay on, with a fan blowing. Do **NOT** directly cover your pet with a wet towel. This effectively traps in the heat as the moisture from the towel is heated by the dogs body heat. You **DON'T** want your pet shivering – increased muscle activity through shivering results in generation of heat as a by-product.

DO NOT try to syringe or pour water down the throat of your pet (aspiration is far more likely to occur). If your dog wants to drink, cool/tepid only, **NOT** cold water. Allow only small amounts often to avoid vomiting and possible aspiration.

DO call your vet for further instruction.

When we fell in love with this little breed and took the plunge to introduce them into our lives, we signed up for not only a wonderful experience with one of the best little dogs in the dogs world, but, we also signed up for the extra care that our little French friends required. Happy Holidays people..xx

