



Animal Care Tech Note

Temperature Requirements for Dogs

The Animal Welfare Act (AWA) provides specific temperature requirements for dogs kept in a variety of housing structures. However, maintaining appropriate temperatures alone may not be enough to ensure a dog's health and well-being. The following information summarizes AWA temperature requirements and added factors that you, as a licensee or registrant, must consider in providing dogs with care that meets the AWA standards.

Temperature Requirements by Housing Type

Indoor and Sheltered Housing

The temperature must not fall below 45 °F for more than 4 consecutive hours. For dogs that are not acclimated to lower temperatures; breeds that are sensitive to the cold (such as short-haired or toy breeds); and elderly, young, sick, or injured dogs, the temperature must not fall below 50 °F. All other dogs must have some method of conserving body heat (such as dry bedding, solid resting surfaces, heat lamps, or other provisions) if the temperature is less than 50 °F.

Dogs cannot be housed in temperatures above 85 °F for more than 4 consecutive hours. If the temperature rises above 85 °F for any length of time, you must provide additional ventilation such as fans, blowers, or air conditioning. Providing ventilation does **not** replace the requirement to prevent temperatures from rising above 85 °F for more than 4 hours.



Outdoor Housing

*Unless specifically approved by the attending veterinarian, outdoor housing is **not** allowed for dogs that are not acclimated to the local temperatures; breeds that are heat- or cold-intolerant; and elderly, sick, or very young dogs.*

Outdoor enclosures must provide adequate space, shelter from the elements, and protection from temperature and weather extremes. When the temperature is below 50 °F, outdoor shelters must contain clean, dry bedding. When the temperature is below 35 °F, dogs must have additional clean, dry bedding of sufficient quantity and material to absorb excess moisture and allow “nestling” to conserve body heat (such as straw, wood shavings, or blankets).

All dogs—including Arctic breeds such as the Alaskan malamute or Siberian husky—are susceptible to temperature extremes. Their shelter must offer protection from the wind; cold; and exposure to rain, ice, and snow. This must include a wind break and rain break at the entrance.

In addition, every dog must have access to adequate shade outside of the enclosure to prevent overheating and discomfort; shelters for outdoor dogs may become too warm for them to remain inside if that is their only opportunity to avoid direct sunlight.

Regardless of housing type, dogs must always have continuous access to water. Dehydration can inhibit a dog's ability to regulate its body temperature, which puts it at greater risk for heat stroke or hypothermia.



Preventing Temperature Stress and Illness in Dogs

Despite housing dogs according to the requirements outlined on the previous page, they may still experience temperature-related stress or illness. To ensure your dogs' health and well-being, you must also consider their ages, breeds, overall health status, acclimation to the local environment, and humidity. You must take appropriate actions if they are showing signs of cold or heat stress.

Factors That Increase a Dog's Risk for Temperature Stress or Illness

- Humidity over 70 percent (especially when combined with high temperatures)
- Poor body condition (over/under weight)
- Age (elderly dogs and dogs under 6 months)
- Pregnancy and nursing
- Injuries and debilitating medical conditions (especially a heart condition)
- Breed (short-nosed breeds, such as the Pug, Pekingese, Shih Tzu, various bulldogs, and others, are less heat tolerant; smaller, short-legged breeds and short-hair or hairless breeds are less cold tolerant)
- Dehydration (can inhibit a dog's ability to regulate its own body temperature)
- Acclimation (it can take anywhere from 7 to 60 days for a healthy dog to acclimate to temperatures outside the required range)

Signs of Temperature Stress and Illness

Below are observable signs that dogs show when they are experiencing temperature-related stress and illness.

Heat Stress Excessive panting, salivation, or thirst Restlessness, anxiety Generalized weakness	Cold Stress Low rectal temperature: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 90–99 °F = needs immediate care Mental depression, lethargy, weakness Shivering or muscle stiffness Reduced heart rate and blood pressure Reduced breathing rate, shallow breathing
Heat Stroke High rectal temperature: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 104 °F = moderate heat stroke; needs immediate care • 106 °F = severe heat stroke dire emergency Vigorous or uncontrollable panting Dark red, tacky, or dry gums and mucous membranes Thick salivation/foam at the mouth Vomiting and/or bloody diarrhea Dehydration Unwilling/unable to rise Trembling, dizziness, or disorientation Collapse, unconsciousness, coma, seizures, and death	Hypothermia Low rectal temperature: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 82–90 °F = moderate hypothermia; needs immediate care • <82 °F = severe hypothermia; dire emergency Stupor Inaudible heart sounds Labored breathing Unconsciousness/coma Fixed and dilated pupils Death

Discuss with your attending veterinarian how you can prevent temperature stress, heat stroke, and hypothermia in your dogs. If a dog shows any of the signs listed above, contact your attending veterinarian immediately and follow their instructions.

For More Information

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