

Guidance for dogs running at parkrun during hot weather.

A reminder to all dog owners that there is no “safe” temperature for running your dog, and anyone running with their dog today is personally responsible for ensuring their animal’s safety.

If it is a day with high humidity, or an ambient temperature approaching or exceeding 20 degrees, the risk of heatstroke to running dogs is **high**. To put that in context, dogs have developed heatstroke running in sub-zero temperatures with snow on the ground, and regularly exceed 42°C (a temperature that would normally be associated with heatstroke) at 5km races in the UK throughout winter.

Please take this risk seriously, and consider your dog’s safety:

- If your dog is not a regular runner, is not fit, is overweight or has been out of regular training, seriously consider not running with them.
- If your dog has been suffering ANY kind of illness that could result in them being even a little dehydrated (especially vomiting and diarrhoea) we recommend not running with them.
- If your dog has any kind of heart or respiratory condition, we recommend not running with them – if you can hear the dog breathing at rest when not panting, this could be a sign of an underlying problem, safer not to risk it.
- If you know your dog will go to the ends of the earth to please you, consider not running with them. They may not tell you they’re in trouble until it is too late.

If you make the decision to run your dog, you are responsible for their safety. Make regular water breaks to allow them to drink, if possible give them access to water throughout the race (streams/paddling pools if possible) or consider splashing their belly with lukewarm water. After the race, ensure you have somewhere cool, shaded, ideally with good air flow and access to water to allow them to cool down.

If you notice your dog starting to show any early signs of heat stress, stop, seek shade, water and call for help:

- Furious panting: panting far more heavily than normal, with an extremely long tongue that may become dark red.
- A change in behaviour: confusion, being unsteady on their legs, dragging their toes or tripping over, if they look like they’re drunk you’re too late and need to actively cool them and get to a vet ASAP.
- Passing diarrhoea or vomiting.
- Actively seeking shade/water or not wanting to run.

Consider empowering your race marshals with the ability to request a dog is stopped if they are concerned.

This advice sheet has been compiled using the best evidence currently available, and is subject to change. Further information and links to the sources of research supporting these suggestions is available at: Heatstroke.dog

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