

A Lesson on Heat Stress

August 3, 2001

We've had Jackie for almost a year now. Having tackled everything from crate escapes, to leashes to basic obedience and housebreaking; the feeling was that we'd learned everything there was to know.

Of course we were wrong - otherwise I wouldn't be writing this!

Just yesterday my husband and I decided to take Jackie to her favorite dog park. Because it was pretty humid out there, I had actually brought a toy for her to play with, just in case no one else was around.

We arrived to find about twenty happily panting dogs running around - Jackie was in heaven!

She loves to entice any willing dog to race her, giving him a head start, only to pass him up at the average 40mph speed. What a show off!

It is unusual for us to see any other greyhounds at this particular dog park. There have been maybe two previous occasions. So when I saw a beautiful light brindle colored boy, I was thrilled. Jackie and Hazelnut made such a cute pair!

As "parents" we introduced ourselves to the humans and spoke about the wonders of greyhound ownership. It turns out, five year-old Hazelnut was just retired a few months ago from Dairyland.

Twenty minuets had passed when Jackie walked up to us "panting like a lizard" - as my husband would say.

But this time she was stumbling a bit with her eyes glazed over. She looked quite intoxicated. "Jackie your hammered!" we jokingly said. We had never seen her like this before. It was clear that the heat was getting to her, so we tried to get her to drink some water. The other greyhound's "parents" explained to us that they had seen Hazelnut this way before. Apparently greyhounds just don't know when to stop. Sometimes they will keep going until they collapse.

We were unsuccessful in getting Jackie to drink anything but two licks of water. Still, she was stumbling around like a drunken old man!

Now I was worried. It was time to take her home. So we said our good-byes and got her into the air-conditioned car as quickly as we could. I assumed that once we got her into the house and she rested she would be fine. Five minuets later nothing had chaged. Then she threw up.

Immediately I thought of the recent death of Minnesota Viking, Korey Stringer due to heatstroke. This was serious.

I grabbed Jackie and told her to sit while I looked through my greyhound books to find information on heatstroke. Fearing that I could do more harm than good, I did not try dramatically cooling her down until I knew it was okay. While I was reading we put a cold towel over her and placed her paws on an icepack (at this point she was still heavily panting and looked very uncomfortable). Here is what I found in the book The Ultimate Greyhound, by Mark Sullivan.

HEAT STROKE/ HEAT STRESS: *A term to describe a critically elevated body temperature as a result of rapid overheating and inability to lose excess heat efficiently by panting.*

Signs: *Overheated greyhounds develop a rapid distressed panting, increased heart rate and a warm dry skin. In severe cases, the Greyhound may vomit, become uncoordinated and delirious, then convulse and collapse into a coma within 5 - 10 minuets.*

Cause: *Hard exercise in an excitable, dehydrated Greyhound, under hot, humid conditions when*