

## FACTSHEET

# Climate change and your pet

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Climate change has become part of our lives and the rising temperature will have consequences for animals as well as people. The risk to the health and welfare of all animals, including our pets, will increase.

Scientists in Australia tell us the average temperature rise in this country is 1.44°C since records began in 1910<sup>1</sup>. More intense heatwaves, bushfires, droughts and floods are predicted as the temperature continues to rise.

In cities – densely built up areas with extensive roads or paved surfaces and few trees – temperatures are predicted to warm more than 4°C by the end of the century<sup>2</sup> unless strong climate action is taken with drastic cuts in greenhouse gas emissions.

### How your pet may be affected

Heatwaves, longer periods of very hot days, are a risk for animals and people. Pets may show signs of discomfort, and dehydration. Brachycephalic pets (those with flat faces and short noses) are at greater risk, as they have difficulty breathing whatever the temperature<sup>3</sup>.

Serious heat stroke will be seen in pets left alone in houses or cars, leading to multiple organ failure and death. Pets with thick heavy coats may be at greater risk of heatstroke.

Taking dogs for a walk on overheated pavements risks burning the pads of their feet<sup>4</sup>. Hot pavements can also increase the overall body temperature of your pet and lead to heat stroke.

Bushfires can lead to persistent smoke and related air pollution and this can cause serious health problems for animals, just as it can in people. The signs in animals include difficulty breathing, increased respiration rate, coughing, eye irritation, nasal discharge and general signs of being unwell<sup>5</sup>.

Diseases may spread further south due to increasing average temperature and more prolonged heat waves, especially those carried by vectors such as mosquitoes, midges and ticks. Examples of diseases that may spread into new areas include heartworm and tick borne diseases.

If you have concerns about any of these matters, please consult your own veterinarian.

## **How to reduce the risks**

1. Provide adequate shade and water for your pet at all times.
2. Do not leave your pet shut in a car or other vehicle.
3. Plan ahead for hot weather, including power outages.
4. Be very attentive to animals you care for during heatwaves and severe weather events.
5. Talk to your council about providing more green areas in the cities.
6. During bushfire events, bring your pets indoors and close doors and windows to protect them from smoke and pollutants.
7. Include your animals in your disaster preparedness planning and evacuation plan.
8. Sign up to become a volunteer with VfCA and help us campaign for action to halt climate change.

## ***Veterinarians for Climate Action* are committed to:**

-  The health and welfare of all animals.
-  Increased education and awareness of the impact of climate change on animals.
-  Supporting science backed emission reductions by 75% below 2005 levels by 2030 and net zero emissions by 2035<sup>6</sup>.
-  Advocating for strong and effective climate action by the Australian Government that contributes to the global effort to halt climate change and rising temperatures.
-  Delivering climate mitigation measures and resilience for veterinary clinics, animal owners and those who care for animals.

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1. CSIRO, *State of the Climate*  
<https://www.csiro.au/en/research/environmental-impacts/climate-change/state-of-the-climate>
  2. The Conversation, *Cities could get more than 4°C hotter by 2100*  
<https://theconversation.com/cities-could-get-more-than-4-c-hotter-by-2100-to-keep-cool-in-australia-we-urgently-need-a-national-planning-policy-152680>
  3. <https://theconversation.com/nine-dog-breeds-at-higher-risk-of-heatstroke-and-what-you-can-do-to-prevent-it-139501>
  4. <https://spca.bc.ca/news/protect-pets-paws-hot-pavement-2/>
  5. <https://www.avma.org/resources/pet-owners/emergencycare/wildfire-smoke-and-animals>
  6. <https://www.climatecouncil.org.au/resources/paris-glasgow-world-move/>