

Dogs, heat make an unhealthy mix

By **LARRY POWELL** / *The Dallas Morning News*

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This is a difficult subject because it involves a tragic situation.

But we'll discuss it because it may save some dogs.

After a recent fund-raising race in a Dallas park, a couple of dog fans e-mailed this column about something seen at the 5K run.

Jody Rudman wrote, "This time of year is hot and humid, of course, especially at 6 p.m., but it's not nearly as hot as it will be. Nonetheless, a surprising number of people showed up with their dogs. Huge, furry dogs. Teeny, tiny dogs. ... As dogs will do, many of them gamely loped on, in the heat and the humidity and throngs. ... Near the end of the run, a Great Dane collapsed from heat exhaustion and dehydration.

"I saw it, and it is a vision seared into my brain that I will never, ever forget. He died. No – he was killed by a careless or perhaps clueless owner. She lamented, 'Gee, he went three miles with me this morning. I can't imagine why this is happening.' ... That dog had no business running in this heat. ... He must have been dragging for at least the last half-mile. Why didn't she stop?

Other dogs who made it to the end were panting without water, while their owners guzzled beer and shot the breeze."

Animal Angels volunteer **Kim Stamerjohn** wrote about the same event, mentioning the Great Dane and adding, "There was also a lady who drug her little pug on this run and it also collapsed. ... Please write something in your column about the uncaring, inhumane act of dragging two such creatures on a 'fun' run. ... These two breeds, among others, are not equipped to deal with such distance, heat or humidity."

AVOIDING TRAGEDY: We admirers of dogs and cats may not have special knowledge about animal health. We depend on educated people such as **Dr. Doug Bronstad**, a specialist in veterinary internal medicine at the Animal Diagnostic Clinic in the Veterinary Referral Center of North Texas, 4444 Trinity Mills Road, near the Dallas North Tollway.

The doctor didn't see this race or these dogs, but he does know the tendencies of their breeds. Great Danes, he says, are prone to cardiac disease. When that condition is

aggravated by overheating, such as in an extended run, things can go sour in a hurry. A pug, he says, is a "brachycephalic" breed – dogs with pushed in noses. Pugs and bulldogs, he says, are prone to respiratory problems. Combine that, a race and a hot, humid day and disaster awaits.

No matter the breed, he warns, dogs are "just like us. We can't go out and run a marathon unless we train for it. If owners push them too far, they'll get in trouble, perhaps with a heat stroke."

Before you try to make your dog a distance runner, visit a vet. Look for problems. You'd rather have your dog than a ribbon, right?

DON'T LET THE DOG DECIDE: Dogs are like kids: They don't always know what's best.

As Jody Rudman wrote, "Remind us all to water our pets, to keep them indoors in this weather, to pay attention to their needs, to deny them a ride in the car if they will have to sit while we run errands. Fido might be lonely for an hour or two, but lonely and alive in the comfort of home is much better than dehydrated or dead in the heat of the summer."

Though it apparently goes against the grain of some humans, employ common sense. You be the dog's brain. Rise up to the duty.

We've got a big ol' hundred-pound mutt named Hambone, who loves to ride in the cab of my pickup. But just because he loves riding in the truck, I'm not going to flip the keys to him and say, "Be home by midnight."

Heck, he can't tell time.

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