

Running with dogs - general advice

Whether or not a dog should take part in a running event is dependent on the individual dog's health, age etc, and for owners to bear in mind that while some dogs will really enjoy it and will be able to cope with running that distance, others won't. Don't expect your dog to be able to run as far or as fast as you. Like us, it takes time for many of them to gain sufficient fitness to be able to run continuously for any length of time and without difficulty

We recommend anyone considering running with their dog as part of an event should:

1. Get their dog checked by a vet to make sure they're happy that the dog would be able to physically cope with the event (e.g. it may not be suitable for young or old dogs, dogs with certain health conditions.)
2. Be aware of the signs of heat stress* and be prepared to remove the dog from the race if needed. The RSPCA recommends that people avoid running with their dog in warm weather. Running in a fur coat means it is much more difficult for them to keep themselves cool. Unlike people, they lose heat through panting and can only sweat through their paw pads. Heatstroke is a real risk as it can happen very quickly and can be fatal
3. All dogs are at risk of heatstroke but some more than others. This includes dogs which are unfit, overweight, very old or young, dogs with thick, heavy coats or with very short flat faces like pugs and bulldog types
4. Make sure they can take and carry enough water with them for the dog.
5. Be able to recognise and understand their dog's body language** so if their dog is anxious, fearful or uncomfortable they can take any necessary e.g. removing their dog from the race, walking in a quieter area etc.
6. Allow your dog plenty of opportunities to go to the toilet and do the things that dogs love doing
7. Keep the lead long enough so they have some space and can set the pace but always make sure you have control

*Some dogs are more prone to heatstroke. For example, dogs with short snouts, fatter or heavily muscled dogs and long-haired breeds, as well as very old or very young dogs. Heatstroke can be fatal and should always be treated as an emergency. Information on the warning signs of heatstroke and first aid advice can be found at:

<http://www.rspca.org.uk/adviceandwelfare/pets/dogs/health/dogsinhotcars/heatstroke>

**Information on understanding dog behaviour and body language:

<http://www.rspca.org.uk/adviceandwelfare/pets/dogs/behaviour/understanding> (I've also attached the behaviour poster as a PDF incase you want to send it over to the local papers).