

# How to Take an Animal's Temperature

## BACKGROUND

The body temperature of a pet can easily be taken at home and can be crucial when monitoring a sick patient. A patient's temperature may become elevated due to stress or a bacterial or viral infection.

Rectal thermometers are the most accurate thermometers available and are easily obtainable. Ear thermometers are also available for pets; except in experienced hands, they do not provide as accurate results.

## GETTING STARTED

Equipment/materials needed:

- Rectal thermometer
- Watch
- Vaseline, K-Y jelly, or other medical lubricant

## TROUBLESHOOTING BEFOREHAND

If your pet does not allow you to take his or her temperature, do not force the procedure. Obtaining a temperature from a cat can be more difficult and may take some practice. Be sure to lubricate your thermometer for easier insertion.

## PROCEDURE

- In calm pets, this can be done with just one person, but with young, excited animals, it may be necessary to have one person distracting and/or holding the pet while another person inserts the thermometer.
- Digital rectal thermometers are timed and will sound when an accurate temperature has been obtained.
- Mercury thermometers can be used. Be sure not to drop the thermometer.

- Place a small amount of lubricant on the end of the thermometer, elevate the tail, and insert the thermometer into the rectum; leave in until it beeps (digital thermometer) or for approximately 1 minute (mercury thermometer).
- Remove thermometer, wipe off lubricant and any feces, and record the result. Clean the thermometer probe with a disinfecting solution, and then dry.

## AFTERWARDS

Normal temperatures of dogs and cats are generally 101°F to 102°F (38.3°C to 38.9°C), assuming comfortable ambient/room temperature and that the body temperature was not taken immediately after strenuous exercise. Any pet with a temperature over 103°F (39.4°C) should be evaluated further, beginning with a phone call to the veterinarian to determine whether an immediate visit to the veterinary hospital is needed.

Practice Stamp or Name & Address