

DOGS LEFT IN HOT CARS—GUIDANCE

Every year thousands of dogs are left in vehicles in warm weather and this can lead to the death or severe suffering of the dog.

Leaving a dog in a car on a warm day is extremely dangerous and dogs left in this situation are likely to experience distress, discomfort, anxiety and some tragically die.

There has been some uncertainty in the past of what powers the police have when responding to a situation where a dog is left in a car on a warm day.

There are a number of powers available to Police officers to rescue the dog from a hot vehicle:



- **S18(1) Animal Welfare Act 2006** – If a Constable reasonably believes that a protected animal (eg a dog) is suffering, they may take, or arrange for the taking of, such steps as appear to him to be immediately necessary to alleviate the animal's suffering.
- **S18(6) Animal Welfare Act 2006** - A Constable may take a protected animal into possession without the certificate of a veterinary surgeon if it appears to them that the animal is suffering or that it is likely to do so if its circumstances do not change AND that the need for action is such that it is not reasonably practicable to wait for a veterinary surgeon.

S17(1e) Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 - Power of Entry to Prevent Serious Damage to Property

*PCSO's if designated under Para 8, Schedule 4 to the Police Reform Act 2002 have the same powers as a Constable to enter to save life and limb or prevent serious damage to property.

S3 Criminal Law Act 1967 - A person may use such force as is reasonable in the circumstances in the prevention of crime (Animal Welfare).

“It is important to remember that the **RSPCA have no powers of entry to rescue dogs** when they are left in vehicles on a warm day, the response and assistance of officers is necessary.”

There is also some great information (aimed at the public) on the following link detailing what to do if they come across a dog in a hot car but also includes signs of heatstroke and emergency first aid for dogs suffering from heatstroke which may be useful for officers attending a call of this nature.

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

A couple of pointers....

- In short, yes, the police can use force to break into a vehicle to rescue a dog. There must however be genuine belief and evidence that the dog is at immediate risk of severe suffering or death.
- A dog that is awake and alert and simply panting wouldn't be enough to force entry but at the same time you cannot simply leave it there if the owner does not return. Depending on the conditions, the dog could start suffering a short while after it has been left and the Animal Welfare Act could be contravened by not acting to prevent its harm.
- Leaving windows partially open and some water in a bowl isn't enough to stop a dog from overheating.
- Look for parking tickets on the windscreen. The expiry time of the ticket may give a time of return for the owner.

If the dog is suffering and entry is forced veterinary care will be sought for the dog. A police log will be created, and the RSPCA will be contacted who will deal with the offence.