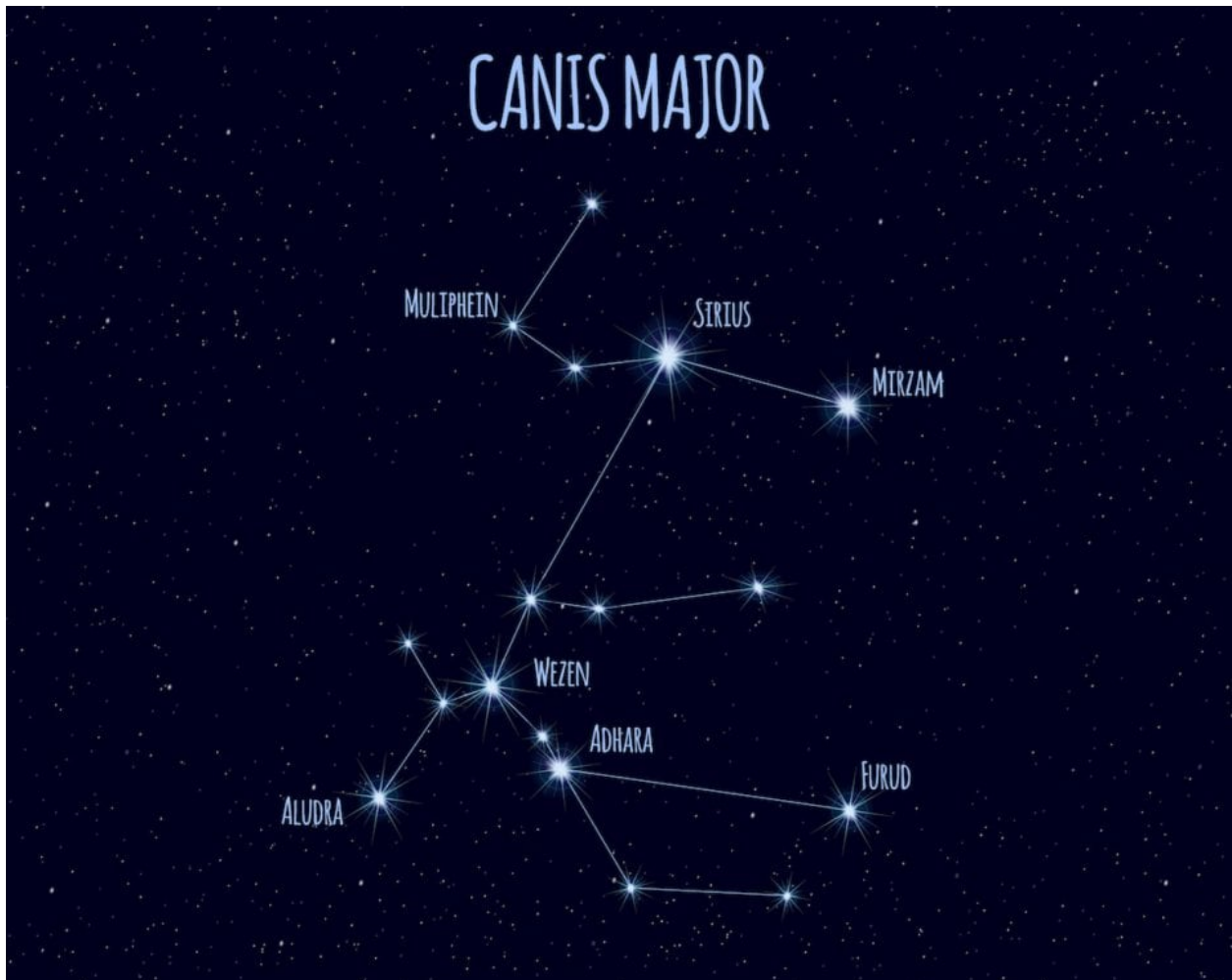


What Are the Dog Days of Summer?

by [Farmers' Almanac Staff](#) Updated: June 7, 2024

The “Dog Days of Summer are from July 3 to August 11 each year. They’re usually the hottest and most unbearable days of the season. We often hear about the “Dog Days” of summer, but few know where the expression originated. Some think it’s a reference to the hot, sultry days that are “not fit for a dog.” Others suggest it’s the time of year when the extreme heat drives dogs mad. But where does the term come from? And what does it have to do with dogs? You may be surprised to see it has to do with the stars!



The phrase is a reference to Sirius, the **Dog Star**. During the “Dog Days” period, the Sun occupies the same region of the sky as Sirius, brightest star visible from any part of Earth. Sirius is a part of the constellation *Canis Major*, the *Greater Dog*.

In the summer, Sirius rises and sets with the Sun. On July 23rd, specifically, it is in conjunction with the Sun, and because the star is so bright, the ancient Romans believed it actually gave off heat and added to the Sun's warmth, accounting for the long stretch of sultry weather. They referred to this time as *diēs caniculārēs*, or "dog days."

Thus, the term Dog Days of Summer came to mean the 20 days before and 20 days after this alignment of Sirius with the Sun—July 3 to August 11 each year. Summer heat is due to the Earth's tilt.

While this period usually *is* the hottest stretch of summer, the heat is not due to any added radiation from Sirius, regardless of its brightness. The heat of summer is simply a direct result of the Earth's tilt.

During summer in the Northern Hemisphere, the tilt of the Earth causes the Sun's rays to hit at a more direct angle, and for a longer period of time throughout the day. This means longer, hotter days.

