

Get Ready for Winter Now

The days are getting colder and your pets trust you to protect them from the winter chill that's sure to come.

TEMPERATURE GUIDELINES:

All pets should be inside when temperatures drop below 20°F. Old, unhealthy, and shorthaired dogs, all cats, and all puppies should be kept inside at 40°F and below.

SHELTER

If at all possible, try to find a better home for your pet than keeping him or her outside. Use your garage, the basement or even a spare bedroom for your pets. You owe it to your pet to provide for their needs and to treat them as family!

Provide a dry, draft-free dog house if you must keep your dog outside for any period of time. It should be large enough to allow your dog to sit, turn around, and lie down comfortably, but small enough to hold in body heat.

The floor should be raised a few inches off the ground and covered with cedar shavings or lots of straw, which will insulate and be a soft place to lie. Straw has large hollow shafts which provide good insulation. **DO NOT USE HAY.** Hay has small seeds, which may hold dust and/or trigger allergies. Blankets as bedding may get wet and freeze, so they are not recommended, but many dogs like to cover themselves with a blanket or quilt.

The doghouse should be turned to face away from the wind, and the doorway should be covered with waterproof burlap or heavy plastic. Consider putting the dog shelter on a rubber utility mat.

Keep your cat inside. Outdoors, felines can freeze, become lost or be stolen, injured or killed. Outside cats are exposed to infectious diseases, including rabies.

If you have an outside cat or if you help feral cats in your area, you can provide a small insulated shelter for their protection. Provide two doorways so they can make quick exits as protection against predators. Stagger the doors so the wind does not blow through.

WATER:

Regularly check your pet's water to make sure it's not frozen. Heated dog dishes and buckets, some with thermostats and chew-proof cords, are available to make sure there is plenty of fresh drinking water available. When animals are outside, they can't burn calories without a fresh supply of water, and if they can't burn calories, they'll get cold.

Also, use a tip-resistant, ceramic or hard plastic water bowl. Your pet's tongue can freeze and stick to a cold metal bowl.

POISONS:

After outdoor walks, use a damp towel to wipe your pet's underside and feet – even clean between the toes. Ice-melting chemicals such as lime rock salt or calcium chloride salt can irritate and burn the pads of your pet's feet. You can protect your dog's feet by spraying the pads with cooking spray or buying little boots. If licking the ice-melting chemicals causes diarrhea and vomiting, call your vet!

Check your garage and driveway for antifreeze. Antifreeze tastes sweet to pets, but most brands are deadly. Should your pet ingest any amount of antifreeze, call your vet immediately! Be sure to thoroughly clean up any spills from your vehicle, and consider using products that contain





propylene glycol rather than ethylene glycol. ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center on line has more information.

GROOMING:

Keep your pet's coat well groomed. Matted fur won't properly protect your pet from the cold. Never shave your dog down to the skin in winter, as a longer coat will provide more warmth. When you bathe your dog in the colder months, be sure to completely dry him before taking him out for a walk.

INSIDE HAZARDS

Monitor wood stoves, space heaters, etc., to protect pets from being burned. Burning embers can get into your pet's coat, or he may touch hot surfaces. Screen all fireplaces and place portable heaters out of reach. Include your pets when you develop a house fire evacuation plan.

Candles can be knocked over by jumping cats, running dogs and wagging tails. Ensure the candle is well weighted with a dome to protect pets. Lit candles should never be left unattended, especially in a home with pets.

GOING OUT OF THE HOUSE:

Slap the hood of your vehicle or honk the horn before starting the engine. Cats often take refuge next to a warm car engine or tire. When the motor is started, the cat can be injured or killed by the fan belt.

Never let your dog off the leash on snow or ice, especially during a snowstorm—dogs can lose their scent and easily become lost. More dogs are lost during the winter than during any other season, so make sure yours always wears ID tags.

Don't let your dog go near ice covered ponds or streams. Falling through the ice is deadly.

A short exposure to sub-zero temperatures can cause frostbite of the feet, nose or ears. Frost-bitten skin is red or gray and may peel off. Treat it by applying warm, moist towels to thaw the affected areas slowly, until the skin looks flushed. Then contact a veterinarian for further care

A shorthaired breed should have a coat or sweater with a high collar or turtleneck with coverage from the base of the tail to the belly.

Never leave your dog or cat alone in a car during cold weather. A car can act as a refrigerator in the winter, holding in the cold potentially causing the animal to freeze to death.

POOPING & HOUSEBREAKING

Many dogs just don't want to eliminate waste in deep snow. Make a more comfortable bathroom by shoveling the snow away in a certain place. Get the dog out there and back very quickly,

Puppies do not tolerate the cold very well, and may be difficult to housebreak during the winter. It's best to paper-train them inside. If your dog is sensitive to the cold due to age, illness or breed type, take him outdoors only to relieve himself.

FOOD INTAKE

If your dog spends a lot of time outdoors, especially as a working animal, provide more food in the winter. Buy a better quality, higher protein food because it takes more energy to keep a working animal's body temperature regulated in winter. If your dog is indoors more at this time of year, he's probably getting less exercise and will require a little less food.