

Winter Safety Tips

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If it's too cold for you to go outside, it's too cold for your pet!

Many people believe that because their pets have a coat of fur they are able to withstand the cold better than humans. This is not the case. Like us, animals are accustomed to the warmth of indoor shelter and cold weather can be as hard on them as it is on people. Forcing animals to be outside during harsh weather can lead to serious illness.

Safety hazards to consider:

Antifreeze: pets love the taste of it and it is extremely toxic

Sidewalk salt: this can damage their paw pads or cause problems if ingested. Use a damp towel to wipe your pet's paws and underside after being outside or using boots can help.

Frostbite: dogs or cats that spend a large amount of time outdoors can be affected by extreme temperatures that damage sensitive areas such as ear tips and paw pads

Frostbite happens when an animal's body gets so cold it pulls all the blood from extremities to the body's core to stay warm. An animal's ears, paws, and tail can get so cold that ice crystals form in the tissue damaging it. Frostbite can be tricky because the tissue doesn't show signs of damage for several days.

Hypothermia occurs when an animal is unable to keep its body temperature from falling below normal and occurs when an animal spends too much time in cold temperatures. In mild cases, the animal will shiver and show signs of depression, lethargy, and weakness. As the condition progresses, muscles will stiffen, the heart and breathing rates slow, and the animal will stop responding to stimuli.

Travelling in the car: If you are going to be longer than a few minutes consider leaving your pet at home. Leaving them in a running car can result in carbon monoxide poisoning.

Fireplaces/Space Heaters: Animals may naturally be attracted to the heat source and can be burned if they get too close. There is also a risk of them knocking the heater over and starting a fire.

Frozen rivers/lakes: Keep your pets off of the ice to ensure your pet does not fall through.
Off Leash: Don't let your dog off leash on ice or snow, especially during a snowstorm, as dogs can lose their scent and easily become lost.

Car hazards: Never leave your cat or dog alone in a car during cold weather. Cars hold in the cold, acting like refrigerators, which could cause your dog to freeze to death.

Also, *be aware of cats seeking warmth under vehicle hoods*. When the vehicle motor is started, the cat can be injured or killed by the fan belt. Make a point of knocking on the hood or sounding the horn before starting the engine. This will warn away any cats who may be hiding in your vehicle.

Supply Non-frozen drinking water: Animals who don't have clean accessible water will turn to gutters and puddles when they can drink deadly antifreeze, oil and other chemicals.