

Cold Weather Safety Tips

During cold weather months, it's always a good idea to take extra precautions when it comes to the well-being of your pets. Here are some guidelines for when the temperature drops:

- Make sure all pets have a warm place to sleep in the house, off the floor and away from drafts. Kittens and older cats will appreciate a heated pad or bed (readily available at pet supply stores).
- Don't leave tiny, short-haired, or very young or old dogs outside without supervision. Warm sweaters or doggy coats will keep them comfortable on walks. Long-haired, larger dogs and those with double coats (like the Nordic breeds) may enjoy the cold and snow, but they, too, should live primarily indoors with the family.
- Dogs that spend time outdoors need plenty of fresh water available. They can't burn calories without water, and if they can't burn calories, they can't keep warm. Also, use a tip-resistant, ceramic or hard plastic water bowl rather than a metal one; when the temperature is low, a dog's tongue can stick and freeze to metal.
- Keep your dog's coat well groomed. Matted fur won't protect her from the cold.
- After a walk, wipe her feet, legs and stomach area to prevent ingestion of salt or dangerous chemicals. For your own walkways, use a pet-friendly ice-melt product.
- Never let dogs off leash on snow or ice, especially during a snowstorm. Make sure they are always wearing ID tags and are microchipped for an extra measure of protection.
- Check your garage and driveway for antifreeze and other chemicals. Antifreeze is a deadly poison, but it has a sweet taste that attracts animals. Wipe up any spills right away. Better yet, use pet-safe antifreeze, which is made with propylene glycol. If ingested in small amounts, it will not hurt pets, wildlife or your family.
- Never leave a pet alone in a car during cold weather. A car can act as a refrigerator, holding in the cold and causing the animal to freeze to death.
- If there are outdoor cats in your area, bang loudly on your car hood or honk the horn before starting the engine. In their search to stay warm, outdoor cats often take refuge next to a warm car engine or tire.
- Keep snow from piling up high next to your fence. A packed snowdrift will provide a boost for dogs to escape the confines of your yard.
- Consider the amount of exercise your dogs receive during colder weather, and adjust their food supply accordingly. Inside and lazy? Less food. Outside and active? More food may be needed to produce more body heat. Consult your veterinarian to be sure.