

Cold weather Safety

It is safe to say that winter and its cold, snowy weather is upon us. That means bundling up and spending as little time outdoors as possible for you and your family; including your pets. Whether your pet is an outdoors pet or an indoor pet that has to go outside on occasion it is important to properly prepare them for winter as well.



Ideally our pets would live where the climate is controlled. But if your pet cannot live inside you can make their outdoor environment as warm and comfortable as possible during the winter months. They should have a shelter that they can get into that can protect them from the elements. Position the shelter so that the door is facing the opposite direction of the prevailing winds in your area. There should be a sturdy flap over the door as well. Their sleeping area should be elevated off of the ground to help reduce the amount of heat that is lost into the ground. They should have a bed, heavy blankets that they can stay warm in, or lined with straw to help insulate the area. Their shelter should be big enough for them to turn around and stand comfortably but not larger than that. If it is larger than that they will not be able to keep the area warm with their body heat. Always have clean, fresh water available that is not frozen. This can be done by frequently replacing the water with fresh or having a heated water dish for them. The use of electric space heaters or heat lamps is not recommended because your pet can receive contact burns from the heat source if they get too close. Also they can tip over the heat source potentially causing fires. Always check on outdoor animals a minimum of two times daily during winter.



There are other safety tips for pets that spend any amount of time outside. Knowing how your pet tolerates the cold weather and adjusting accordingly is key. You may need to shorten their walks and any amount of time spent outside. Animals that are older or have conditions like arthritis may have a harder time walking on the snow and ice and may be more prone to slipping. Animals with short legs tend to get colder faster because their bellies and bodies are more likely to come into contact with snow making them wet. Also pets with certain diseases such as heart disease, kidney disease and diabetes tend to have a harder time keeping their body temperature regulated and can become more susceptible to other health problems.



You should never shave down long haired dogs in winter because their longer hair provides warmth. Always make sure your dog is completely dry before going outside after a bath. If your pet will allow it put a jacket or sweater on them when they go outside. You can also put boots on them; if you want to do this make sure they fit your pet and work with them to get used to there being something on their feet. Have several pairs of jackets and boots available so that your pet has on a dry set every time they go outside. When your pet comes back in to the house, check their paws for signs of injury or damage. Signs include cracked and bleeding paw pads or sudden lameness while walking. Wipe down



their feet, legs, and belly after their walks to clean off ice removal products, antifreeze or other chemicals that they can pick up outside. When letting you pet outside it is best to keep them leashed also keep a collar on your pet and have them microchipped because they can quickly become lost in winter. Pets cannot pick up recognizable smells that would normally help them find their way home due to ice and snow so they can become disoriented and lost



easier. Avoid frozen bodies of water such as lakes, ponds, and rivers when walking your dog. It is hard to say how thick the ice will be and if it will be able to support the dogs' weight.



This situation can quickly become dangerous for both you and your dog.

If you are going somewhere make some noise before you start your car. A warm engine can be an attractive spot for outdoor or feral cats to get warm but the cat can become injured when the car is started. Either bang on the hood of the car or honk the horn before you start the car so that the cat will move. Also leave your pets home if you are going to be running errands, a car can quickly cool off making your pets cold. Clean up any antifreeze spills that you notice right away because a small amount can be deadly to animals.

Keeping your pet at a healthy weight throughout winter is ideal; it is not ideal to feed them extra during winter because of the health problems associated with extra weight. Pets that live outside will need more calories because they are going to put those calories towards generating body heat and keeping warm. Also be aware of signs such as pets that are shivering whining, acting anxious, are not moving as fast or at all, or seeming weak as these are signs that they are getting cold and need to get inside to warm up quickly. If they do not get inside to warm up they can start to experience hypothermia.

If you have any questions or would like more information about cold weather safety please call us at (920) 668-6212 or email us at info@cgvet.com. You can also go to these websites for more information: <https://www.avma.org/public/PetCare/Pages/Cold-weather-pet-safety.aspx>, <https://www.aspc.org/pet-care/cold-weather-tips> or <http://www.banfield.com/pet-health-resources/pet-health-concerns/pet-safety-tips/cold-weather-tips-for-your-dog>.