

## Cold Weather Tips

Your cats and dogs will be happiest and healthiest, regardless of the season, if you keep them inside with you. Here are some guidelines for protecting your pets when the temperature drops:

- If you keep the household thermostat low, make sure your cats have access to warm sleeping spots. Kittens and older cats will appreciate a heated pad or bed (readily available at pet supply stores).
- Take dogs out frequently to exercise and relieve themselves but keep them inside the rest of the time. In particular, don't leave tiny, shorthaired and very young or old dogs outside without supervision. Warm sweaters or doggy coats will keep them comfortable on walks. Longhaired 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.
- Keep dogs' coats well groomed. Matted fur won't protect them from the cold.
- To prevent ice-melting chemicals from irritating your dogs' feet, consider applying cooking spray to the foot pads or buying them protective boots. After a walk, wipe the 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. They can lose their scent and easily become lost. Make sure they are always wearing ID tags and consider getting them microchip identification implants 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 and children. 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 keep warm, outdoor cats often take refuge next to a warm car engine or tire.
- Keep snow from piling 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 the supply of food 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.
- Make sure your pets have a warm place to sleep, off the floor and away from drafts. Cozy cat or dog beds with warm blankets are perfect.
- If your dogs must be outside, it is imperative that they be protected by a dry, draft-free doghouse that is large enough to permit them to sit and lie down comfortably but small enough to hold in body heat. The floor must be raised a few inches off the ground and should be insulated with cedar shavings or straw. The house should be turned to face away from the wind, and the doorway covered with waterproof burlap or heavy plastic.
- Dogs that spend a lot of 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.