

Fall Pet Care & Safety Tips

We seldom associate the autumn with hazards to our health or the health of our pets. Most of us look forward to this invigorating, busy and active time of year. Who would imagine that a hike in the woods or meadows on a cool crisp, autumn day might produce potential harm to our pets via rodents, fleas, ticks, snakes or mushrooms – yes, mushrooms that grow during the spring and fall, which are attractive to the eye and yet can be poisonous. Actually poisonous mushrooms can cause a range of health issues from gastroenteritis to severe hallucinations and can even prove fatal if ingested. Contact your veterinarian immediately if your pet has eaten a wild mushroom.

During the fall, rodents are ever present in cities in urban as well as rural areas as they search for shelter from the cold weather. They build nests and also attempt to infiltrate our homes for warmth and comfort. It's important to be careful when using rodenticides around the house, the garage, and back yard, as they are highly toxic to pets and cause bleeding disorders that can be deadly. You may wish to consider using traps rather than a rodenticide to solve a rodent problem.

Snakes are also a fall related hazard to your pet's well being. As they prepare to hibernate for the winter, they may be found in unusual places unexpectedly by your pet. Familiarize yourself with the various types of venomous snakes that inhabit your area and where they are generally located at this time of year. Then AVOID these areas!

Fall is back to school time, so make sure your children's school supplies, i.e. pens, magic markers, paints, glue and glue guns, etc. are out of your pet's reach. They can cause digestive and intestinal problems if consumed.

You may wish to increase the caloric intake of your pet in colder weather. During the heat of summer, your pet may have been eating less. However, in the cooler months your pet needs to generate more body heat to keep him warm.

Make sure that your pet always has an abundance of cool and clean water and that he remains hydrated. Check his outdoor water bowls frequently and also make SURE his water has not frozen. Use plastic rather than metal bowls or containers for his water.

If you are preparing your car for the colder winter weather and are changing the engine coolant, be aware that many coolant products contain a chemical called Ethylene Glycol that is highly toxic to your pet. Check the ingredients and make sure you use a pet friendly and safe coolant product. Also, clean up any spillage of a coolant product so that your pet can't find and lick it up!

Finally, gradually expose and increase your pet's exposure to the colder weather and don't leave him outside in uncomfortably cold weather for any length of time. Moderate his activity and monitor the amount of time he spends outdoors.

Socialize your pet by taking him for walks in your neighborhood or the park. I have learned that our pets love meeting and greeting pet lovers and pets as much as much as we humans do. This is also the time of year when it is generally safe (check the temperature outside, of course) when you can actually enjoy taking your pet with you on errands without worrying that he is going to get overheated or too cold in the car.

Savor the colors and scents of the season. Enjoy spending quality indoor as well as outdoor time with your best furry friend and companion!