

## Protect Your Pet =s from Winter Safety Hazards

Cozy evenings by the fireplace – snowy walks in the park and around the neighborhood. No matter how much fun the snow and cold may represent for you and your pet, there are hazards posing threats to your health as well as your dogs. Be aware that the cold weather may be injurious and hazardous to your pet's well-being.

The winter season poses many challenges and potential problems to your pet's animal companions. Slippery ice and snow may cause him to fall and injure himself. Salt on the ground used to deflect the ice's impact may hurt or irritate his delicate paws. The icy cold air may pose such problems as frostbite as well as eye, ear, nose and throat infections. In below freezing temperatures, your pet's ears, nose, feet and tail are likely to be impacted. You may see them limping or in pain and licking at the areas affected by the cold. It is a good idea to massage petroleum jelly into your pet's paws foot pads before going outside and toweling off the feet and applying moisturizer to them once you are back inside. The changes in heating and temperatures indoors and outdoors may not only impact your pet's breathing and heart rate but may cause allergic reactions as well. Do your best to shield your pets from wind, moisture and cold.

In the severe cold, your pet may experience hypothermia. Symptoms include weakness, shivering, shaking, disorientation and a lack of mental alertness. You may wish to dress your pet for cold weather. Pet coats, boots, booties, pet safe ice melters and hats are available for them among other apparel items to limit their exposure to the elements and retain as much body heat as possible.

Leaving pets by themselves in a vehicle or even the garage in cold temperatures is not advisable, especially if pets are not accustomed to being in the cold weather. Cars quickly become extremely cold when left unattended without the heat or motor on.

Antifreeze with its sweet smell and taste result in the death of approximately 90,000 animals each year. As little as 1/2 teaspoon can be toxic to a cat and merely 1/4 cup can kill a medium size dog. Therefore, do not leave antifreeze unattended or allow it to spill on the garage floor or anywhere your pet can find and consume it. If you observe your pet drinking any amount of antifreeze, take her to a veterinarian immediately!!!

Don't allow your dog to go off-leash in the snow. Dogs often lose their scent in cold weather and can become lost. More dogs are reported lost during the winter than any other time of year. Always keep your dog on a leash and keep appropriate id with his name, address & phone number on his collar.

If your dogs enjoy swimming in a pond or lake, do not permit him to do so during the winter. Keep him on a leash around open water or unstable ice. The dog may fall in and be unable to find his way out. Hypothermia can set in quickly and may result in the death of the dog.

If you have a dog that is arthritic, make certain she does not spend much time outside in the cold and damp weather. Make sure she is receiving the medications that ease her pain and increase her mobility.

Pets need to have fresh water at all times – make sure your pets have water – NOT ICE – in their water bowls. Heated pet bowls offer a solution to frigid temperatures. They are available in stainless steel or plastic. You can find them at most pet supply and feed stores.

Keep your pet well-exercised in spite of the snow and cold. But do not keep him outside for long periods of time – especially when the weather is below 45%. Twenty minutes in the cold weather is plenty. Make an effort to play with and exercise him during the warmest period of the day and indoors as much as possible.

Although this winter has seemed excessively long, unforgiving and relentless, keep in mind, that spring will inevitably reappear and that life will become much easier and more joyful and pleasurable for you and your pet. In the meantime, do your best to keep yourselves and your pets, happy, well-exercised and comfortable!!!