

## Winter Pet Care & Safety Tips

As fall and winter rapidly approach, it is time to prepare ourselves and our pets for the arrival of cold and even severe weather. Along with the cool, crisp air, colorful foliage and falling leaves of autumn come shorter days and longer chillier nights. It isn't long before temperatures drop, then plummet to freezing and are accompanied by frost, snow, wind chills, blizzards and ice.

The following tips will help keep your pets safe and warm this winter.

- 1). Don't leave your pets outside when temperatures fall below freezing. Although dogs need outdoor exercise, keep outdoor activity moderate and short in duration. Pets that are mostly indoors need time to adapt to cold temperatures by developing a thicker coat and toughening their footpads for snow and ice. Let your pet develop a tolerance to the cold gradually by limiting outdoor time at the beginning of the season. Keep in mind that your pets are safer and more comfortable indoors during all sorts of extreme weather.
- 2). When walking your pet in the snow or during snowstorms, always keep him on a leash. Dogs may enjoy the sensation of snow falling on their faces and fur, but they can become easily distracted, lose their scent and become lost in the snow. Make sure dogs are wearing ID tags before you take them out in the snow. Did you know that more dogs are lost in the winter than during any other time of year?
- 3). Never leave pets alone in a car, as they can freeze to death in a very short time during very cold weather. Cars can actually act like a refrigerator, retaining the cold air and causing the animal to freeze to death.
- 4). Be wary of frozen ponds, lakes or other bodies of water. The ice may not be thick or sturdy enough to sustain the weight of your pet. If a pet should happen to fall through the ice, do not attempt to save the pet yourself. Instead, dial 911 immediately and seek help from anyone who is nearby and accessible.
- 5). Once snow begins to fall, city streets and sidewalks may be coated with salt and sand that can irritate your dog's paws. After walkings, make sure to wipe his paws and between his paws clean with a warm, wet cloth to prevent him from developing skin irritation and/or ingesting harmful chemicals and salt.
- 6). You may wish to provide a winter coat and even boots for small dogs, those with short hair and older dogs. A protective covering can help prevent hypothermia. If your dog is shivering and refuses to play or walk, it is too cold for him, and he should be brought inside.
- 7). Keep your dogs and cats away from antifreeze. In the winter, many car owners use antifreeze to ensure that their vehicles will start. Both cats and dogs are attracted to the sweet scent and taste of this toxic chemical. Do not leave antifreeze unattended or allowed to spill on a surface that your pet may walk on or lick.

8). Pets who spend a greater amount of time outdoors in winter need more food - preferably a high quality diet with adequate protein and extra fat. Maintaining warmth depletes their energy. Also, regularly check your pet's water bowl to make certain the water is fresh and not frozen. Provide plenty of fresh, warm water in a large, deep plastic bowl (not metal that can stick to the pet's tongue) throughout the day.

9). Car motors may be dangerous (even deadly) to cats and other animals seeking warmth under your car's hood. Small wildlife seeking warmth and protection may crawl under the hood. Make a habit of banging on the hood, checking under the hood for animals and honking your horn before starting your car.

10). Wind-chill poses a threat to pets, even those protected by shelters. It is essential that outdoor dogs must be protected from the elements by a dry, draft-free dog house that is large enough for the dog to sit, stand, move around and lie down comfortably. The floor should be elevated a few inches off the ground and covered with bedding made of straw or cedar. The entrance of the doghouse should be turned away from prevailing winds, and it should be covered with a thick flap of heavy, waterproof fabric or heavy-duty plastic. In my humble opinion, animals should not live "outside" no matter what the season, let alone the extreme temperatures and conditions of summer or winter.

11). This is the time of year when many holidays (Jewish New Year, Halloween, Thanksgiving and Christmas, Hanukkah, New Years Eve, New Year Day, etc) are celebrated. Give thought to your pet's safety and wellbeing. Keep him away from toxic plants and holiday/winter products such as rich foods such as chocolate, cakes & sweets, rich, fatty food scraps, bones from fish, pork and poultry, alcoholic beverages, egg nog, fruitcakes, and so on. Keep him away from poinsettias, mistletoe, holly berries, Christmas tree pine needles, tinsel, and Christmas tree preservatives and water.

12). Monitor your pet's whereabouts when entertaining. Provide him with a quiet place where he can avoid the commotion and confusion caused by strangers in his home and avoid the potential of your pet fleeing out the front door as guests arrive and depart. Place the dog in his safe and comfortable room with a sign on the door that says " Please Stay Out, Dog in Here." to keep curiosity seekers at bay.

13). Remember to tack down or cover electrical cords. Keep lighted candles on a surface that your pet cannot reach. Keep them away from flames and fire!

14). Think of your pet as you would a young human child, and try to "pet" or "child proof" your home to the best of your abilities. Keep your eye on your pet, and do your best to keep him out of mischief and out of harm's way. It is your responsibility as a loving "pet parent" to supervise and take good care of your animal companion - not only during the fall and winter, but throughout the year and years! Enjoy this wonderful time of year in health and happiness together!

