



## Cold Weather Hazards

The temperatures start dipping, we are bundled up, but our pets face new hazards. You can keep them safe by taking a few precautions.



### Outdoors

Pets that are young, old, or sick should not spend much time outdoors when the temperatures are cold. They may not be able to keep themselves warm. Arthritic pets often become stiff with the cold weather and can easily slip on snow or ice. Watch them closely or keep them on a short leash to keep them from falling.

Frostbite is a concern in very cold weather. Cats, especially, seem to be affected. The ear tips are the most common area, but the tail, nose and toes are all susceptible. If part of your pet's body is very cold or has a color change, bring him in for an exam so we can check for frostbite.

### Staying warm

Outdoor cats need a sheltered area to stay warm. Dogs need a winterized doghouse.

- The proper size: just big enough to turn around and stand

- Insulated with straw, wood shavings or a blanket
- Change the bedding or dry it frequently as it gets wet from snow
- A waterproof flap covering the door
- Face the door away from the wind

Keep your pet groomed so mats don't build up in the fur. Mats can interfere with your pet's natural ability to stay warm.

Make sure your pet has fresh water by using a heated water bowl or changing the water several times a day. Don't use a metal bowl if it's not heated. Outdoor pets need more food as they burn more calories to stay warm. Increase the food about 10-15% during cold weather.

### Snow and ice

Snow, ice and salt can irritate pads and the area between the toes. Take these precautions:

- Wash paws with warm water to remove ice and salt. Make sure no ice balls are clinging to the fur. Trimming the hair on the paws will help
- Use a pet-safe ice melt product
- Put booties on your dog
- Check for cracked pads and treat if needed or use a protectant





### **Poisons**

Some winter products can be poisonous to pets. Wipe up any spills immediately and use pet-safe products if possible. Antifreeze is the biggest concern. It has a sweet taste so pets will often lick it up. Unfortunately, it is highly toxic and can cause kidney failure. Even a small amount can be deadly so call us right away.

### **Final points**

Cats will often try to keep warm under the hood of a car. Before you start up your car, bang on the hood to scare them off.

If you have a fenced in yard, prevent snow from building up along the fence. This makes a perfect spot for adventurous dogs to climb over and take off.

Just like humans, some pets like the cold weather and others hate it. Regardless, take precautions so your pet stays healthy and avoids injuries during the winter months.

