

Fact Sheet

Cold-Weather Pet Tips

People who live in areas experiencing cold weather and winter storms need to take extra precautions to keep their animals safe. Pets left to fend for themselves in cold weather are susceptible to injury and death. Here are some simple tips from American Humane:

Be Prepared

- Plan ahead and pay attention to cold-weather warnings.
- Unless significant power outages are experienced, most cold-weather episodes and winter storms are “shelter in place” events, so pet care needs should be planned for in the home. Keep your pet preparedness kit well-stocked and ready — in a winter storm, you may not be able to leave your home for several days.
- Leave your pets’ coats a little longer in the winter to provide more warmth. That summer “short cut” from your groomer should be avoided during cold weather. If you have short-haired breeds, consider getting them a coat or sweater that covers them from neck to tail and around the abdomen.

Winter Pet Care

- When you bathe your dogs in cold weather, make sure they are completely dry before taking them outside for a romp or walk.
- When walking your dogs during bad weather, keep them on leash. It’s easier for a dog to become lost in winter storm conditions — more dogs are lost during the winter than during any other season. (And don’t forget to microchip and put ID tags on your dogs and cats!)
- Leash your pets if you have frozen ponds, lakes or rivers nearby, as loose pets can break through ice and quickly succumb to hypothermia before trained ice-rescue personnel can arrive. Never try an ice rescue of a pet yourself — leave that to trained professionals.
- When you are working on housebreaking your new puppy, remember that puppies are more susceptible to cold than are adult dogs. In cold conditions or bad weather, you may need to opt for paper training your new pet rather than taking the pup outside.
- Keep your pets inside, both during the day and night. Just because they have fur doesn’t mean they can withstand cold temperatures.
- If dogs are left outside, they should have a draft-free shelter large enough to stand and turn around in, yet small enough to retain body heat. Use a layer of straw or other

bedding material to help insulate them against the cold. Make sure the entrance to the shelter faces away from the direction of incoming wind and snow.

- Keep your cats indoors. Cats can freeze in cold weather without shelter. Sometimes cats left outdoors in cold weather seek shelter and heat under the hoods of automobiles and are injured or killed when the ignition is turned on. Banging loudly on the hood of your car a few times before starting the engine will help avoid a tragic situation. (This is true for wild animals in cold weather as well).
- When taking your pets out for a bathroom break, stay with them. If it's too cold for you to stand outside, it is probably also too cold for your pets.

Precautions for Outdoor Pets

- If your pet is outside during cold weather:
- Remember that staying warm requires extra calories. Outdoor animals typically need more calories in the winter, so feed them accordingly when the temperature drops. Talk to your veterinarian for advice on proper diet.
- Watch your pet's outside fresh-water bowl. If it is not heated, you may need to refresh it more often as it freezes in cold weather.
- Salt and de-icers: Many pets like to go outside to romp and stomp in the snow, but many people use powerful salt and chemicals on their sidewalks to combat ice buildup. Thoroughly clean your pets' paws, legs and abdomen after they have been outside, to prevent ingestion of toxic substances and to prevent their pads from becoming dry and irritated. Signs of toxic ingestion include excessive drooling, vomiting and depression.
- Ice and snow: When you let your pets in from a walk or a romp outside, make sure to wipe their paws and undersides — get those ice balls off as soon as possible, as they can cause frostbite. After being outside, check your pets' paws, ears and tail for frostbite. Frostbitten skin usually appears pale or gray and can be treated by wrapping the area in a dry towel to gradually warm the area. Check with your veterinarian if you suspect frostbite.
- Use nontoxic antifreeze. Antifreeze is great-tasting to pets, but even a very small amount ingested can be deadly. Look for "safe" nontoxic antifreeze, consider using products that contain propylene glycol rather than ethylene glycol, and make sure all spills are cleaned up immediately and thoroughly. Contact your veterinarian immediately if you suspect your pets have ingested any antifreeze!

Visit www.americanhumane.org/fact-sheet/ for more fact sheets and information on how to keep your pets safe and healthy.