



Winter Safety for Pets

Exposure to winter's dry, cold air and chilly rain, sleet and snow can cause chapped paws and itchy, flaking skin, but these aren't the only discomforts pets can suffer. Winter walks can become downright dangerous if chemicals from ice-melting agents are licked off of bare paws. To help prevent cold weather dangers from affecting your pet's health, please heed the following advice from our experts:

- Repeatedly coming out of the cold into the dry heat of your home **can cause itchy, flaking skin**. Keep your home humidified and towel dry your pet as soon as he comes inside, paying special attention to his feet and in-between the toes. Remove any snow balls from between his foot pads.
- **Never shave your dog down to the skin in winter**, as a longer coat will provide more warmth. If your dog is long-haired, simply trim him to minimize the clinging ice balls, salt crystals and de-icing chemicals that can dry his skin, and don't neglect the hair between his toes. If your dog is short-haired, consider getting him a coat or sweater with a high collar or turtleneck with coverage from the base of the tail to the belly. For many dogs, this is regulation winter wear.
- **Bring a towel on long walks to clean off stinging, irritated paws**. After each walk, wash and dry your pet's feet and stomach to remove ice, salt and chemicals—and check for cracks in paw pads or redness between the toes.
- **Bathe your pets as little as possible during cold spells**. Washing too often can remove essential oils and increase the chance of developing dry, flaky skin. If your pooch must be bathed, ask your vet to recommend a moisturizing shampoo and/or rinse.
- **Massaging petroleum jelly or other paw protectants into paw pads before going outside can help protect from salt and chemical agents**. Booties provide even more coverage and can also prevent sand and salt from getting lodged between bare toes and causing irritation. Use pet-friendly ice melts whenever possible.
- Like coolant, **antifreeze is a lethal poison for dogs and cats**. Be sure to thoroughly clean up any spills from your vehicle, and consider using products that contain propylene glycol rather than ethylene glycol.
- **Pets burn extra energy by trying to stay warm in wintertime**. Feeding your pet a little bit more during the cold weather months can provide much-needed calories, and making sure she has plenty of water to drink will help keep her well-hydrated and her skin less dry.
- Make sure your companion animal has a **warm place to sleep, off the floor and away from all drafts**.
- Never let your dog off the leash on snow or ice, especially during a snowstorm. **Dogs can lose their scent in the snow and easily become lost**. More dogs are lost during the winter than during any other season, so make sure your dog always wears an ID tag.
- If your large dog spends most of his time outside, take proper precautions during the colder months. **Make sure your dog has an insulated and waterproof dog house and access to fresh water**. Never leave your dog outside during a snowstorm or inclement weather including sleet, ice, snow, wind, or extreme cold.
- **Bang loudly on the hood of your car before starting the engine. Outdoor, stray and feral cats sometimes sleep under car hoods to stay warm, but the fan belt can injure or kill a cat when the motor starts**. Banging on the hood can help avoid catastrophe and give the cat a chance to escape.
- **Remember, if it's too cold for you, it's probably too cold for your pet, so keep your animals inside!** If left outdoors, pets can freeze, become disoriented, lost, stolen, injured or killed. In addition, don't leave pets alone in a car during cold weather, as cars can act as refrigerators that hold in the cold and cause animals to freeze to death.

*Winter Safety Tips provided by the ASPCA.