

Cold Weather Pet Safety

It is that time of year where we all bundle up in sweaters and coats to stay warm when outside. It is important to not forget about your pets! Here are a couple things to remember when taking your pets outside.

* **The most sensible thing to do is keep pets indoors**

The best idea for pet owners during winter's freezing temperatures is to keep your pet inside with you and your family. The happiest dogs are taken out frequently for walks and exercise but kept inside the rest of the time.

Don't leave pets outdoors when the temperature drops. During walks, short-haired dogs may feel more comfortable wearing a sweater. Nothing is cuter than a dog in a sweater! No matter what the temperature is, wind-chill can threaten a pet's life. Pets are sensitive to severe cold and are at risk for frostbite and hypothermia during extreme cold snaps. Exposed skin on noses, ears and paw pads can quickly freeze and suffer permanent damage.

* **Know when to bring them inside**

So when you're outside with your dog, how do you know if he is uncomfortable and it's time to take him inside? Pay attention to these signs: Whining, Shivering, Lethargy and/or Anxiety. If they are showing these signs, bring them indoors ASAP.

* **Clean your dog's feet after walks**

When your dog comes inside after being outdoors in the snow or ice, wipe off his paws, legs and abdomen thoroughly. If your dog will tolerate them, booties are a great way to keep your pets paws protected from the elements, as well as harmful salt. You can also apply Vaseline to their paws before and after the walk to help with irritation.

* **Be careful with cats, wildlife and cars**

Most people may not realize, but warm engines in parked cars attract cats and small wildlife, who may crawl up under the hood. To avoid injuring any hidden animals, bang on your car's hood to scare them away before starting your engine.

* **Speak out if you see a pet left in the cold**

If you notice a pet left in the cold, document what you see: the date, time, exact location and type of animal, plus as many details as possible. Attempt to get video and photographic documentation, if you can safely do so. Then contact your Animal Control Department or Police Department to alert them of the issue.

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