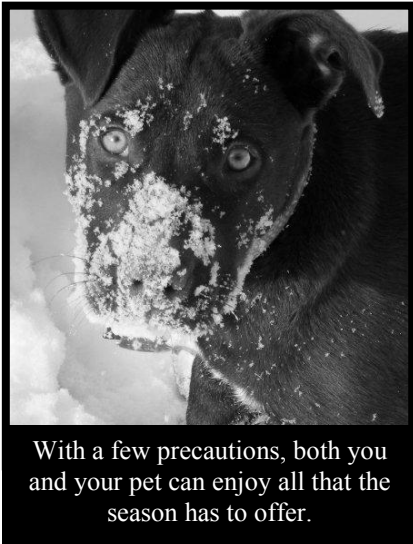


Winter Pet Care

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'Tis the season to be freezing... When the temperature drops, make sure your pets stay warm and safe despite the weather.

Some pets can safely be outside for longer periods of time than others. Larger animals and animals with heavy coats are better adapted to cold temperatures than cats, small dogs or shorthaired animals. Very young or old animals or animals with health conditions should not be left outside. Any animal that is outside should be provided shelter from the wind and snow and have bedding such as straw or blankets to curl up in. An enclosed shelter that is just large enough for the animal to turn around in is comfortable, yet conserves body heat. Make sure the water is not frozen or provide a heated water dish.

During the winter, cats sometimes sleep under the hood of cars to take advantage of the warm engine. If there are outside cats in the area, it is a good idea to bang on the hood of a car before starting it to let any cats escape.

Keep your dog on a leash if you are near a frozen lake or pond. Dogs can easily fall through the ice and it is difficult for them to climb out.

Wipe your dog's paws off with a warm rag when coming in from outside to remove snow, salt or chemical ice melt that may have accumulated there. These can be irritating to the paws as well as the digestive tract if licked off.

Check under your car to be sure you are not leaking antifreeze. Antifreeze is very poisonous to animals, and only a small amount can make an animal very ill. Consider using products that contain propylene glycol instead of ethylene glycol as a safer alternative for pet owners.

Never leave your dog or cat in the car in the winter. The car acts like a refrigerator and keeps cold in, and pets can quickly freeze to death.

Two important conditions that can occur in cold weather are hypothermia and frostbite. Signs of hypothermia include shivering, depression, lethargy or weakness. Animals with hypothermia should be warmed up with blankets or hot water bottles and taken to your veterinarian. Frostbite is difficult to see on an animal until days later, but if you suspect your animal has frostbite you need to bring it into a warm environment. You can soak the extremities in warm water to restore circulation, but do not rub the area. Take your animal to a vet to determine if any treatment is necessary.

Winter can be a dangerous time of year, but it doesn't have to be for your pets. With a few precautions, both you and your pet can enjoy all that the season has to offer.