



WINTER PREPAREDNESS FOR PETS

Every year from mid-October to mid-November, every state prepares for winter. **Don't forget your pets when you prepare.** Winter is a time for sitting by fires and having a cup of cocoa but for our pets it can be very challenging. They are faced with possible flea infestations, accidental poisonings, arthritis and general discomfort with the change of season.

Pets are vulnerable to hypothermia and frostbite, just like us, and must be protected from extreme temperatures. This is especially important for very young, sick, and very old pets.

Pet parents should take precautions to minimize their furry friends' exposure to such agents. Here is a list of survival tips for your pet this winter.

#1: Protect their Paws

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 dangerous if chemicals from ice-melting agents are licked off of bare paws.

Booties help minimize contact with painful salt crystals, poisonous anti-freeze and chemical ice-melting agents. They can also help prevent sand and salt from getting lodged in between bare toes, causing irritation. Use pet-friendly ice melts whenever possible.

Massaging petroleum jelly into paw pads before going outside helps to protect from salt and chemical agent and moisturizing after a good toweling off helps to heal chapped paws. Bring a towel on long walks to clean off stinging, irritated paws. After each walk, wash and dry your pet's feet to remove ice, salt and chemicals and check for cracks in paw pads or redness between the toes

2: Treat your pet for fleas all year round

As the temperature drops many owners believe that fleas die off and using flea control is no longer necessary. This is a common misconception as a warm heated home provides the ideal environment for fleas to breed and it is crucial that flea control is a year round commitment. Pets should be treated every month to ensure they remain protected 365 days a year.

3: Provide your pet with extra warmth

Many pets are just not suited to the cooler weather and like us, will be a lot more comfortable in a warm winter coat that can protect them from the elements. There are coats designed for dogs of all sizes and needs, with coats for indoor dogs that are lightweight and warm

4: Be cautious when using poison baits for rodents

Every year rats and mice invade properties in search of shelter in the cooler months, leading to an increased use of baits and poisons in winter.

These poisons can pose a great risk to our pets if eaten and can lead to a decreased appetite, blood stained urine, blood stained discharge from mouth or back end, breathing difficulties, and can cause them to collapse or even lead to sudden death.

5: Moderate your pet's food intake and keep them hydrated

Just like humans, pets use energy to create body heat, and in winter may require extra calories to maintain a comfortable warmth. If you live in the colder parts of the country increase the size of your pet's meals by a small amount to help them to stay healthy. Pets need to be kept hydrated in every temperature and by leaving fresh water out it will encourage them to keep drinking even when they are not feeling as thirsty

6: Provide warm shelter

Most pets would love to come inside and curl up in a nice warm spot in the house, but this may not always be possible and pets that spend long periods of time outside will need to have adequate shelter and warmth to protect them. A good kennel should be strong, waterproof and insulated and should be elevated off the ground and away from any wind draughts. The kennel should also be large enough for your pet to stand up and turn around inside, but small enough that it will retain their body heat.



#7: Be aware of signs of arthritis

Also, older pets are more prone to arthritis - which worsens in cold temperatures - and can be more at risk of slipping on ice when walking. If your senior pet shows signs of lameness, is limping, is moving slowly up or down stairs, or is having difficulty when trying to jump, please consult your veterinarian for evaluation and options that can improve your pet's comfort

#8: Be cautious of winter hiding spots

Many pets - cats in particular - seek warm spots such as a warm car engine, clothes-dryer or fireplace into a perfectly snug sleeping spot. Pet owners must be vigilant in the colder weather to make sure that they know where their pets are before starting their car's engine or closing the door and turning the dryer on.



#9: Pet-safe your electrical devices and candles

One of the most common sources of fire in homes are from pets from electric heaters or candles that are unsupervised and knocked over. Also, if they get too close to the heat source they can run the risk of being burnt or singed. There is also the risk that they could chew through the electrical cords so it is important that pets are supervised at all times. This is especially important with puppies and kittens.



#10: Exercise your pets

Pets that are cooped up inside for long periods of time become restless and can begin to display behavioral issues. It is important that your pets get at least one hour of exercise each day. Exercise will help keep up your pet's body temperature and maintain their mental and physical health. If you cannot go outside, get creative and run up and down the stairs, play tug-a-war, hide-and-seek. It's good for both of you.

11: Keep them groomed and protect their skin

Repeatedly coming out of the cold into the dry heat 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.

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. Trim long-haired dogs to minimize the clinging of ice balls, salt crystals and de-icing chemicals that can dry on the skin. (Don't neglect the hair between the toes!). Brushing your pet regularly not only gets rid of dead hair, but also stimulates blood circulation, improving the skin's overall condition.



Remember, if the weather's too cold for you, it's probably too cold for your pet.