

NAFA Winter tips for your pet's safety

Here are some tips to help make sure that your dog or cat stays healthy and comfortable during the winter months.

1. Keep pets away from antifreeze solution, and promptly clean up any antifreeze spills. Antifreeze is attractive to pets but is deadly, even in very small amounts.



2. Do not leave your pets outdoors unattended when the temperature gets below 40 degrees. Pets that are mostly indoors need time to adapt to cold temperatures. They must build up a thicker coat and get their footpads toughened for snow and ice. Pets that get too chilled can develop hypothermia or even frostbite. Ear tips are especially susceptible to frostbite.

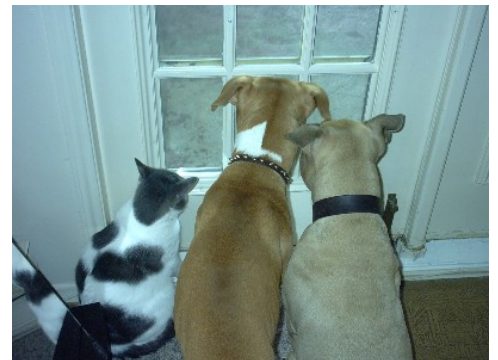
3. Short-coated dogs (Greyhounds, Dobermans, Boxers and Boston Terriers) should not go outside without a coat or sweater in very cold weather, except to relieve themselves. Small dogs with short coats (Chihuahuas, miniature Pinschers, and miniature Dachshunds) are especially vulnerable to cold, and may not be able to tolerate any outdoor exercise in extremely cold weather.



4. Dogs with long fur on the bottom of their paws often develop ice balls between the pads and toes of the feet. To prevent ice balls from forming, trim the hair around your dog's feet.

Apply a small amount of Vaseline, cooking oil, or PAM spray to your dog's feet before taking him for a walk in snow. The oil helps prevent ice balls from sticking. Make sure you use edible oil; most dogs will lick their paws after you apply the oil.

5. If your pet walks on salted sidewalks or streets, be sure to wash his paws after your walk. Salt is very irritating to footpads. Gently rub the bottom of the feet to remove the salt as soon as your dog is off the road.
6. Many animals are less active during the winter, and don't as many calories as in the warmer months. Reduce your pet's diet during the winter, to avoid excessive weight gain. You may wish to consult with your veterinarian about the right winter food portions for your pet.
7. Most cats prefer to spend their winter days indoors; be cautious if your cat likes being outside. Don't let it out in bitterly cold weather, and be sure it has a warm place to go if it does spend a lot of time outdoors. Cats that are left outdoors may crawl into a warm car engine to get warm, which can kill them. It's much safer to keep your cat indoors during the winter.





8. If your dog is an outdoor dog, however, he/she must be protected by a dry, draft-free doghouse that is large enough to allow the dog to sit and lie down comfortably, but small enough to hold in his/her body heat. The floor should be raised a few inches off the ground and covered with cedar shavings or straw. The house should be turned to face away from the wind, and the doorway should be covered with waterproof burlap or heavy plastic.

9. Pets who spend a lot of time outdoors need more food in the winter because keeping warm depletes energy. Routinely check your pet's water dish to make certain the water is fresh and unfrozen. Use plastic food and water bowls rather than metal; when the temperature is low, your pet's tongue can stick and freeze to metal.

10. 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.

11. Keep pets safe from fire. If using a fireplace or wood stove, put a protective barrier or fire screen to prevent burns. Never use a space heater if you own pets. Pets can chew on the cord and be electrocuted. Pets can knock over or land on the space heater resulting in burns or worse, set fire to the home.



12. Keep ID tags on pets. More pets are lost in the winter than any other time of the year. Pets lose their ability to scent their way home in snow and ice conditions

13. Don't leave your pet alone in a car during cold weather. A car will act as a refrigerator in the winter, holding in the cold, and the animal could freeze to death.



14. Make Drinking Water Available ... as the temperature drops the water places for all the outdoor animals, squirrels and birds are frozen in the morning. This is the time of the year when you want to be diligent about replacing that water for the animals. Dehydration at this time of the year can lead to bladder stones and urinary track blockages especially in cats.

15. Be sure that your pet is current on vaccinations and medical care. A healthy pet will tolerate winter stress much better than an unhealthy one.

Probably the best prescription for winter's woes is to keep your dog or cat inside with you and your family. The happiest dogs are those who are taken out frequently for walks and exercise but kept inside the rest of the time. Dogs and cats are social animals who crave human companionship. Your animal companions deserve to live indoors with you and your family.

For more information contact NAFA – 870-932-1955

