

TOP 10 COLD WEATHER TIPS FOR YOUR PETS

1. Don't leave pets outdoors when the temperature drops below freezing. Dogs need outdoor exercise but take care not to keep them out for lengthy periods during very cold weather. Short-coated dogs may feel more comfortable wearing a sweater during walks.
2. Wind-chill can threaten a pet's life, no matter what the temperature. Outdoor dogs 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 shavings or straw. The house should be turned to face away from the wind, and the doorway should be covered with a flap of heavy waterproof fabric or heavy plastic.
3. Pets spending a lot of time outdoors need more food in the winter. Keeping warm depletes energy. Routinely check your pet's water dish to make certain the water is fresh and not frozen. Use plastic food and water bowls rather than metal when the temperature is low, your pet's tongue can stick and freeze to metal.
4. Never leave your dog or cat alone in a car during cold weather. A car can act as a refrigerator in the winter, holding in the cold and causing the animal to freeze to death.
5. During the winter, outdoor cats sometimes sleep under the hoods of cars. When the motor is started, the cat can be injured or killed by the fan belt. If there are outdoor cats in your area, bang loudly on the car hood before starting the engine to give the cat a chance to escape.
6. Never let your dog off the leash on snow or ice, especially during a snowstorm – dogs can lose their scent and easily become lost. More dogs are lost during the winter than any other season, so make sure yours always wears ID tags.
7. Thoroughly wipe off your dog's legs and stomach when he comes in out of the sleet, snow or ice. He can ingest salt, antifreeze or other potentially dangerous chemicals while licking his paws and his paw pads may also bleed from snow or encrusted ice.
8. Puppies do not tolerate the cold as well as adult dogs, and may be difficult to housebreak during the winter. If your puppy appears to be sensitive to the weather, you may opt to paper train him inside. If your dog is sensitive to the cold due to age, illness, or breed type, take him outdoors only to relieve himself.
9. 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.
10. Visit your veterinarian for a checkup before the cold weather strikes. Cold weather may make certain conditions worse, such as arthritis. Sudden changes in the weather or drops in temperature may affect pets suffering from osteoarthritis.

Information provided by Friends of Animals Rice County, Inc.
Meetings held the second Tuesday each month
Please call 257-5056 for details.