



Cold Weather Animal Care Information from the Wood County Humane Society

It is important to not only look after yourself during the cold of the winter, but you should also take care of your pet's needs. Here are some tips as well as information to help you prepare your pet for colder temperatures.

General care

- Always wipe off your pet's legs and paws after it has been outside. This will help you to monitor its paws for cuts and burns from ice melting chemicals and will also help to prevent your pet from ingesting antifreeze, salt, and other commonly used cold-weather chemicals. Make sure you always clean up any cold-weather chemical spills, especially around your vehicle.
- Keep rat and mouse poison away from pets, and dispose of deceased mice.
- Outdoor cats are known to seek shelter under a vehicle's hood. To prevent injury or death to these animals, bang loudly on the hood before starting your vehicle.
- Make sure your pet has a warm place to sleep that is off the floor and is away from drafts. Make sure your pet does not ingest holiday plants (pine, mistletoe, poinsettia, for example) or holiday decorations. Watch your pets around open flames and space heaters. Have your furnace checked for carbon monoxide leaks.

Tips for Frostbite and Hypothermia Prevention

- Keep your pets indoors.
- Do not leave your pet alone in a vehicle. Vehicles hold cold temperatures much like a refrigerator, which may cause your pet to freeze to death.
- Your dog's fur helps to keep it warm in cold weather. Do not shave your dog, and do not take your dog outside after a bath until its fur has been dried completely. Short-haired dogs may need a sweater or coat to help them stay warm during cold weather.
- Puppies, elderly or ill, and certain breeds of dogs are more sensitive to cold temperatures and should only be taken outdoors to relieve themselves.
- If you must house a dog or cat outside, they can be susceptible to frost bite and hypothermia.
 - Frostbitten tissue may initially appear pale or gray, as well as hard and cold. As the area thaws, it may turn red. Thawing is very painful. If frostbite is severe, tissue will eventually turn black and slough off. Veterinary treatment should be sought if frostbite is severe enough (for pain medication and antibiotics).
 - Animals with hypothermia often have violent shivering, slow and shallow respiration, and a slower heart rate. Their gums may appear pale or blue. If they are not warmed **slowly**, they will become listless and eventually will be unresponsive and may die. A veterinarian should be consulted if you suspect hypothermia

- If you must keep your dog or cat outside, then make sure it has appropriate shelter. Its shelter must be big enough to allow the animal to stand, turn around, and lay down, but it should not be so big that it does not retain body heat. The shelter must be waterproof and have at least three (3) sides and a top and should protect your dog from wind, snow, rain, and drafts. It should be elevated a few inches off the ground to allow air to flow underneath and to help prevent dampness.
 - Blankets are not the best to use for warmth in cold weather for cats and dogs. They get wet and freeze. A layer of straw is an inexpensive way to help protect them from the cold, holds heat better and is still pretty comfortable to sleep on!
 - Be sure to monitor your pet's water so it does not freeze. A heat lamp, or heated bucket is an easy way to prevent water from freezing. Also, outdoor dogs may need to consume more food during cold weather to produce body heat and maintain weight.