



KEEPING PETS SAFE IN COLD WEATHER

PAWS[®]
CHICAGO
pawschicago.org

As temperatures start to plunge, there are many threats to pets. If you suspect frostbite or hypothermia, call your veterinarian immediately!

PLAN AHEAD

KEEP PETS INSIDE & LIMIT TIME OUTDOORS

Dogs and cats are vulnerable to hypothermia (low body temperature) and frostbite (frozen body parts) when exposed to cold temperatures for too long. If you notice your pet is shivering, **that is a clear sign that he is cold**. Each pet is different, but smaller dogs and those with little or no hair need special attention as they are most vulnerable.

If you have an outdoor cat, bring him inside!

PREP PAWS FOR THE OUTDOORS

- Clip long fur between the toes and pads to prevent uncomfortable ice balls from forming while walking in the snow.
- When returning, wipe snow and ice off your dog's belly, legs, and especially paws with a moist rag. (Removes salt or other harmful chemicals that could be ingested when licking.)

THINGS TO AVOID

ICE-COVERED BODIES OF WATER

Keep your pet away from frozen ponds, lakes or other bodies of water that may not be able to support his weight.

ROCK SALT

Salt de-icer's are toxic (can be ingested by licking paws) and irritating to pets.

Tips for Prevention

- Apply petroleum jelly or commercially-available organic wax balms for dogs to the paw pads for protection
- Look for salt-free ice melters that are safe for pets to walk on. (At PAWS we use a beet juice product)

BUNDLE UP!

Pet coats and sweaters are more than fashionable — they also keep your pet warm in cold temperatures. Dog booties can also help protect paws and keep them warm.

NEVER LEAVE PETS ALONE IN A CAR

Once a car's ignition has been turned off, cold temperatures can quickly infiltrate the vehicle, creating a freezer-like environment. During the winter, limit travel with your pet to only that which is necessary. To avoid frostbite or hypothermia, bring pets along when you leave the vehicle — even for quick stops.

BE AWARE OF HEAT-SEEKING CATS

Outdoor cats often look for heat by crawling under the hoods of cars. Before starting your car in the cold weather, bang on the hood or fender of the car or honk the horn a few times before turning on the engine.

ANTI-FREEZE

Spilled car antifreeze containing the substance ethylene glycol is deadly for your pets. Its sweet smell and taste attracts pets.

Signs of Antifreeze Poisoning

- Stumbling
- Vomiting
- Depression
- Shortly after displaying symptoms, the pet's kidneys will shut down

What to do if You Suspect Antifreeze Poisoning

- Take your pet to the veterinarian immediately as there may be time to administer the antidote for this poison.

Tips for Prevention

- Clean up antifreeze spills right away.
- Switch to a safer car antifreeze, one that contains **propylene glycol** rather than the more common ethylene glycol.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

SIGNS OF FROSTBITE IN PETS

- Tips of ears and tail have red or gray-tinged skin
- Skin often appears pale, gray, or blue at first and red/puffy later
- Pain in ears, tail, or paws when touched
- Skin that stays cold
- Shriveled skin
- **For cats:** paws, tail, and ears are most vulnerable
- **For dogs:** tail, ears, foot pads, and scrotum are most vulnerable

WHAT TO DO IF YOU SUSPECT FROSTBITE

Triage your pet by:

- Gently warming the afflicted areas by immersing them in warm (not hot) water or gently covering them with warm, moist towels for at least 20 minutes.
- Handle affected areas gently.
- Never rub or massage affected areas as this will worsen the damage.
- Do not use hair dryers, heating pads, or electric blankets to warm up a hypothermic pet as this may result in burns.
- **Call your veterinarian immediately!**

SIGNS OF HYPOTHERMIA IN PETS

- Violent shivering, followed by listlessness
- Problems breathing
- Weak pulse
- Lethargy
- Muscle stiffness
- Lack of appetite

WHAT TO DO IF YOU SUSPECT HYPOTHERMIA

Triage your pet by:

- Wrapping them in a warm blanket or coat. (Fabrics can be warmed in the dryer for a few minutes.)
- Bringing him into a warm room.
- Placing warm, towel-wrapped water bottles against your pet's abdomen or at her armpits and chest, then wrap them in a blanket.
- Do not use hair dryers, heating pads, or electric blankets to warm up a hypothermic pet as this may result in burns or compromised circulation to vital organs.
- **Call your veterinarian immediately!**