



## **Hershey's Mill**



**Winter is Coming**

## **Winter Weather & Pet Safety**

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*[The following information is from the American Veterinary Medical Association, the Humane Society of the United States, and the American Humane Society]*

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As the warm fall weather morphs into the colder winter weather, it is time to consider the needs of our pets. Just as warm weather poses certain risks, such as exercising in the heat of the day or leaving your

pet in hot cars, so to cold winter weather also poses potentially serious threats to your pets' health.

**General:** Regardless of the season of the year, make sure that your pet is fully vaccinated and have your pet seen regularly, at least once or twice a year, by your veterinarian for a complete physical exam. Getting ahead of problems makes it easier to establish a diagnosis and develop a course of treatment. Keep your pet at a healthy weight and watch your pet's body condition and keep it in a healthy range. Talk to your veterinarian about your pets' nutritional needs during cold weather months.

Many

pets become lost in winter. Make sure your pet has a well-fitting collar with up-to-date identification and contact information. *Consider a microchip which is a more permanent means of identification. Keep a recent photo of your pet.*

**Know the limits** (how long can your pet stay outside?): Just like people, *pets' cold tolerance may vary from pet to pet based on their size, coat, body fat stores, activity level and overall general health.* You may need to shorten your dog's walks and other outside activity in cold weather to protect you both from cold weather associated health risks. This is especially true for *arthritic and elderly pets* who may have more difficulty walking on snow or ice cover surfaces and who may be more prone to slipping and falling.

It's a common belief that dogs and cats are more resistant than people to cold weather because of their fur, but it is untrue. *Like people, dogs and cats are susceptible to frostbite and hypothermia.* There is no "one size fits all" rule and the decision as to how long to have your pet outside in cold weather must be a personalized individual choice. However, if your pet is elderly or dealing with a health condition, your pet should be spending most of its time indoors and with short, supervised outings.

**Outdoor dress:** If your dog has a short coat or seems bothered by cold weather, consider a sweater or dog coat. However, make sure that the sweater/coat is dry because a wet sweater/coat can make the pet colder. Also, you might also consider the use of booties to protect the dogs' feet, but if you use them, make sure that they fit properly.

**Check the paws/wipe down:** If not using booties on the pets feet, check the dogs paws frequently for signs of cold-weather injury such as cracked paw pads or bleeding. During a walk, a sudden lameness may suggest an injury or could be due to ice accumulation between the pets' toes. You may be able to reduce the chances of this ice accumulation by clipping the hair between the dog's toes.

During an outside walk, your pets' feet, legs, and belly may pick up deicers, antifreeze, or other chemicals that could be toxic. *Once inside, wipe down (or wash) the pet's feet, legs, and belly to remove these potentially toxic chemicals.*

**Recognize problems:** *While walking, if you notice your dog whining, shivering, seems anxious, slows down, stops moving or seems weak, get them back inside as quickly as possible as they may be showing signs of hypothermia.* Frostbite is often harder to detect and may not be fully apparent until some days after the damage is done. In either case, consult your veterinarian for proper action.

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## **COLD WEATHER PET HAZARDS**

Take steps to ensure your pets' health during cold weather.

### **BE PREPARED:**

- Talk to your veterinarian about your pet's risks in cold weather. Cold weather may worsen some medical conditions such as arthritis.
- Have an emergency kit that includes your pet's needs in case of severe weather or prolonged power outage
- If your dog has a short coat or seems bothered by cold, consider a

sweater or dog coat

- Consider booties for your dog's feet; make sure they fit!

#### KNOW YOUR PET'S LIMITS:

- Know your pet's tolerance for the cold; adjust accordingly
- Shorten walks in very cold weather
- Contact your veterinarian if your pet is shivering or extremely lethargic after being out in the cold

#### AVOID INJURY/POISONING:

- Use pet-safe de-icing products
- Clean up any antifreeze spills quickly
- Stay away from frozen ponds, lakes and streams
- Only take your pet in the car when absolutely necessary. Never leave your pet unattended in a vehicle
- Check your dog's paws frequently for signs of irritation or injury
- Wipe down or wash your pet's feet, legs and belly to remove packed snow, ice, salt and de-icing chemicals after walks.

**Know the limits:** Be aware of your pet's tolerance for cold weather, and adjust accordingly. You will probably need to shorten your dog's walks in very cold weather to protect you both from weather-associated health risks.

- Arthritic and elderly pets may have more difficulty walking on snow and ice and may be more prone to slipping and falling.

- Long-haired or thick-coated dogs tend to be more cold-tolerant, but are still at risk in cold weather.

- Short-haired pets feel the cold faster because they have less protection, and short-legged pets may become cold faster because their bellies and bodies are more likely to come into contact with snow-covered ground.

- *Pets with diabetes, heart disease, kidney disease, or hormonal imbalances (such as Cushing's disease) may have a harder time*

*regulating their body temperature, and may be more susceptible to problems from temperature extremes. The same goes for very young and very old pets. If you need help determining your pet's temperature limits, consult your veterinarian.*

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## **Winter Pet Safety**

Nothing can spoil good cheer like an emergency trip to the veterinary clinic. These tips can help keep your winter season from becoming not-so-happy – for your pet and for you.

### **Plan in advance**

Make sure you know how to get to your 24/7 emergency veterinary clinic before there's an emergency. Talk with your veterinarian in advance to find out where you would need to take your pet, and plan your travel route so you're not trying to find your way when stressed. Always keep these numbers posted in an easy-to-find location in case of emergencies:

- Your veterinarian's clinic phone number
- 24/7 emergency veterinary clinic (if different)
- ASPCA Poison Control Hotline: [1-888-426-4435](tel:1-888-426-4435) (A fee may apply.)

### **Food**

Keep people food away from pets. If you want to share treats with your pets, make or buy treats formulated just for them. The following people foods are especially hazardous for pets:

- Chocolate is an essential part of the treats for many people, but it is toxic to dogs and cats. Although the toxicity can vary based on the type of chocolate, the size of your pet, and the amount they ate, it's safer to consider all chocolate off limits for pets.
- Other sweets and baked goods also should be kept out of reach. Not only are they often too rich for pets; an artificial sweetener often found in baked goods, candy and chewing gum, xylitol, has been linked to liver failure and death in dogs.
- Turkey and turkey skin – sometimes even in small amounts – can cause a life-threatening condition in pets known as pancreatitis.
- Table scraps – including gravy and meat fat –also should be kept away from pets. Many foods that are healthy for people are poisonous to pets, including onions, raisins and grapes. During the holidays, when our own diets tend toward extra-rich foods, table scraps can be especially fattening and hard for animals to digest and can cause pancreatitis.
- Yeast dough can cause problems for pets, including painful gas and potentially dangerous bloating.

#### Inside the Home:

- Flowers and some plants can result in an emergency veterinary visit if your pet gets hold of them. Amaryllis, mistletoe, poinsettias, balsam, pine, cedar, and holly are among the common winter plants that can be dangerous and even poisonous to pets who decide to eat them. The ASPCA offers lists of plants that are toxic to [dogs](#) and [cats](#).

- Candles are attractive to pets as well as people. Never leave a pet alone in an area with a lit candle; it could result in a fire.
- Potpourris should be kept out of reach of inquisitive pets. Liquid potpourris pose risks because they contain essential oils and cationic detergents that can severely damage your pet's mouth, eyes and skin. Solid potpourris could cause problems if eaten.

### Hosting parties and visitors

Visitors can upset pets, as can the noise and excitement of parties. Even pets that aren't normally shy may become nervous in the hubbub that can accompany a gathering. The following tips will reduce emotional stress on your pet and protect your guests from possible injury.

- All pets should have access to a comfortable, quiet place inside if they want to retreat. Make sure your pet has a room or crate somewhere away from the commotion, where your guests won't follow, that it can go to anytime it wants to get away.
- Inform your guests ahead of time that you have pets or if other guests may be bringing pets to your house. Guests with allergies or compromised immune systems (due to pregnancy, disease, or medications/ treatments that suppress the immune system) need to be aware of the pets (especially exotic pets) in your home so they can take any needed precautions to protect themselves.
- Guests with pets? If guests ask to bring their own pets and you don't know how the pets will get along, you should either politely decline their request or plan to spend some time acclimating the pets to each other, supervising their interactions, monitoring for signs of a problem, and taking action to avoid injuries to pets or people.

- Pets that are nervous around visitors should be put in another room or a crate with a favorite toy. If your pet is particularly upset by houseguests, talk to your veterinarian about possible solutions to this common problem.
  - Exotic pets make some people uncomfortable and may themselves be more easily stressed by gatherings. Keep exotic pets safely away from the hubbub of the holidays.
- Watch the exits. Even if your pets are comfortable around guests, make sure you watch them closely, especially when people are entering or leaving your home. While you're welcoming hungry guests and collecting coats, a four-legged family member may make a break for it out the door and become lost.
- Identification tags and microchips reunite families. Make sure your pet has proper identification with your current contact information – particularly a [microchip](#) with up-to-date, registered information. That way, if they do sneak out, they're more likely to be returned to you. If your pet isn't already microchipped, talk to your veterinarian about the benefits of this simple procedure.
- Clear the food from your table, counters and serving areas when you are done using them – and make sure the trash gets put where your pet can't reach it. A turkey or chicken carcass or other large quantities of meat sitting out on the carving table, or left in a trash container that is easily opened, could be deadly to your family pet. Dispose of carcasses and bones – and anything used to wrap or tie the meat, such as strings, bags and packaging – in a covered, tightly secured trash bag placed in a closed trash container outdoors (or behind a closed, locked door).
- Trash also should be cleared away where pets can't reach it

### When you leave the house

- Take out the trash to make sure your pets can't get to it, especially if it contains any food or food scraps.



## Winter travel

Whether you take your pets with you or leave them behind, take these precautions to safeguard them whenever you're traveling.

- Interstate and international travel regulations require any pet you bring with you to have a [health certificate](#) from your veterinarian – *even if you are traveling by car*. [Learn the requirements](#) for any states you will visit or pass through, and schedule an appointment with your veterinarian to get the needed certificate within the timeframes required by those states.
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  - Pets in vehicles should always be safely restrained and should never be left alone in the car in any weather. [Proper restraint](#) means using a secure harness or a carrier, placed in a location clear of airbags. Never transport your pet in the bed of a truck.
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  - If you're traveling by air and considering bringing your pet with you, talk with your veterinarian first. Air travel can put some pets at risk, [especially short-nosed dogs](#). Your veterinarian is the best person to advise you regarding your own pet's ability to travel.
  - Pack for your pet as well as yourself if you're going to travel together. In addition to your pet's food and medications, this includes bringing copies of their medical records, information to help identify your pet if it becomes lost, first aid supplies, and other items. Refer to our [Traveling with Your Pet FAQs](#) for a more complete list.
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  - Boarding your dog while you travel? Talk with your veterinarian to find out how best to protect your pet from [canine flu](#) and other contagious diseases, and to make sure your pet is up-to-date on vaccines.
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**Quick action can save lives.** If you believe your pet has been poisoned or eaten something it shouldn't have, call your veterinarian or local veterinary emergency clinic immediately.

You may also want to call the ASPCA Poison Control Hotline: [1-888-426-4435](tel:1-888-426-4435).

Signs of pet distress include: sudden changes in behavior, depression, pain, vomiting, or diarrhea.

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