

Cold Weather & Winter Pet Safety

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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!
- Ensure outdoor pets have insulated shelter and unfrozen drinking water.
In extreme cold, even outdoor pets should stay inside

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: Just like people, pets' cold tolerance can vary from pet to pet based on their coat, body fat stores, activity level, and health. 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.

This article is very abbreviated: [Click Here for the Full AVMA Article](#)



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.
- **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.
- **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.
- **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