

## Cold Front for Dogs

**Owners across the nation share their secrets to keeping dogs warm in winter.**

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Winter in your neck of the woods may mean a transformation of your yard from mowed grass to frozen tundra or a welcome cooling after a frying-hot summer. In either case, winter means climate change, which means change in care for your pets. How should you winterize your dog for your climate? Take some tips from dog owners around the country.

Maple Grove, Minnesota: AcclimateDerric and Jeannene Saville's Labrador Retriever/hound mix, Jen, loves winter in frigid Maple Grove, a suburb of Minneapolis, where they annually get 60 to 90 inches of snow. Jen is as happy catching a Frisbee in the snow as at the beach, and she loves rolling on her back in the snow, making what the Savilles call "dog angels." But Jen's enjoyment of the cold is partly thanks to her owners' preparation.

"We let her spend a lot of time outside as it is getting colder," Derric Saville said. "This encourages her undercoat to grow and her outer hairs to lengthen. Jen is primarily an inside dog, but she spends a long time outside compared to other indoor dogs. We take her cross-country skiing with us, and our only limiting factor is when we get too cold."

The Savilles have the right idea, according to Minott Pruyn, DVM, of Pruyn Veterinary Hospital in Missoula, Mont. "Almost any dog will be fine, even in a very cold climate, as long as a protected environment is available and the dog is acclimated. A dog that is outside a lot as the weather gets colder will adapt."

As temperatures drop, dogs' coats adjust by filling out to better insulate the dog from cold, Dr. Pruyn said. However, a matted coat can't do its job. "Good grooming is perhaps the most critical factor in preparing your dog for the winter," he said. Outside dogs require a good shelter that stays dry and keeps out the wind. "I prefer a shelter large enough to get into easily but small enough to be warmed by the dog's body heat," Dr. Pruyn said. "The door should also be positioned away from blowing wind and covered. Ripped canvas strips over the door work well or, if you can train your dog to use it, an aluminum dog door." Also consider straw or hay rather than blankets. Fresh, clean straw or hay retains warmth and allows moisture to evaporate more effectively than blankets.

Longwood, Florida: Cover Up Shorthaired DogsKathleen Prince admits her Miniature Pinscher, Ramirez, is a wimpy dog. "He could never winter anywhere north," Prince said. "If it gets down to 68 degrees, he's uncomfortable. We'll ask him if he wants to put on his sweater, and he'll start jumping around until we put it on him. He loves his sweaters. In fact, he has more clothes than I do." Ramirez's wardrobe includes two raincoats; three jackets, including a leather bomber jacket; six sweaters; a light cotton jacket; a basketball jersey (Orlando Magic, of course); and a special wrap Prince can use to strap Ramirez to her in a hurricane.