

Keep Dogs Safe Amid Wintry Weather

The American Humane Association offers cold-weather tips for cats and dogs.

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Cold, stormy weather has already wreaked havoc in certain parts of the country, including a blizzard in South Dakota that knocked out power and stranded motorists. Cats and dogs require special attention during the winter months, and the American Humane Association urges pet owners to take precautions.

When it gets chilly, wild animals and cats left outside may seek a car engine for warmth. Before starting the engine, bang on the hood a few times to make sure you won't be traveling with an extra passenger.

Cats and dogs might have fur, but that doesn't mean they can withstand extreme temperatures. Pets should be kept inside if possible.

If dogs are left outside, they should have a draft-free shelter large enough to stand and turn around in, yet small enough to retain body heat. American Humane suggests a layer of straw or other bedding material to help insulate pets against the cold.

Typically, outdoor animals need more calories in the winter, so it's best to feed them accordingly when the temperature drops. Talk to your veterinarian for advice on a proper diet.

Many pets like to go outside to play in the snow, but many people use powerful salt and chemicals on their sidewalks to combat the ice. Clean paws after each outing to prevent pads from becoming dry and irritated. Signs of ingestion include excessive drooling, vomiting, and depression.

Mosquitoes and other bugs can be a year-round problem. Remember to keep pets on regular heartworm, flea, and tick preventives.

Medications used to treat the sniffles can be harmful to pets. Keep prescriptions and over-the-counter drugs out of a pet's reach. Do not medicate animals yourself unless under the direction of a veterinarian.