



WINTER PET CARE

To prevent winter weather from becoming a health hazard there are a few basic precautions every pet owner can take. An annual check-up with the veterinarian upon the onset of winter is a good idea. Necessary booster inoculations can be given, and medications renewed.

Outdoor pets should have a dry, warm, roofed enclosure with an above-ground floor and bedding to protect them from inclement weather and low temperatures. Water bowls should be monitored frequently, and if ice has formed, it should be replaced with fresh water. Recently there have been commercially available heaters for bowls that will prevent ice from forming.

House dogs enjoy romping in the snow with families and it can be an exhilarating experience for both owner and dog if some precautions are taken. During very cold weather owners should always accompany dogs outdoors, supervise their play, and take them back indoors at the same time they return. Dogs should then be briskly toweled dry and feet should be carefully checked for possible snow and ice ball accumulation in pads.

Ageing cats and dogs may be more adversely affected by cold and damp so it is important that they are monitored more closely and kept in a protected area, heated, if possible. There are now many products that are safe and readily available to provide for heating in or under a pet's bedding if the shelter itself is unheated.

To prevent hypothermia small pets should be allowed outdoors only for a very short time, and always under supervision.

All too often outdoor cats seeking a warm shelter will find refuge under the hood of a recently parked car. If you live in a neighborhood that cats frequent, do check before you turn on the engine. Every year spilled antifreeze is responsible for the deaths of many pets. Its sweet smell and taste are especially attractive to dogs and cats. Please make sure that your vehicle does not leak this poisonous substance. Promptly wipe up any spills you see in your garage or driveway.

Responsible owners know that pet care is important all year round. During the winter, however, it may become a matter of life and death. Take a few easy precautions. Keep your pet healthy and alive.