

It's Time to Winter-Proof Your Cats

Cats, dogs need extra protection from cold weather, snow and ice, says Pet Sitters International.

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Frigid winter temperatures can be dangerous for cats, as is antifreeze, say pet-sitting experts. Animal-welfare groups are urging pet owners to bring cats and dogs indoors during the frigid weather in many parts of the country. The cold temperatures, snow and ice that send people back inside for another layer of protection also call for extra care for the family pet, according to Pet Sitters International.

In addition to keeping pets inside as much as possible, the association for professional pet sitters offers the following winter-proofing tips to help keep pets healthy and safe: Provide adequate shelter if pets must be kept outside. Add straw for extra insulation from the cold and furnish a snug, warm bed that doesn't sit directly on the ground.

Dogs should not be left out during a snowstorm because they frequently lose their scent in snow and ice and easily become lost.

Supply pets with extra food and water when outside for extended periods of time. Make sure to use plastic dishes, as glass or porcelain crack when temperatures drop.

Ice-melting chemicals and salt can irritate and burn the pads of your pet's paws. Thoroughly wipe off your pet's feet once he has returned inside.

Clip the long hair on the bottom of your pet's feet to prevent buildup of ice balls that can be painful and difficult to remove.

Trim nails regularly. It is difficult to maintain solid footing in icy conditions with long nails.

Antifreeze is poisonous. Clean any spills and store household chemicals out of reach. Consider using products that contain propylene glycol rather than ethylene glycol.

Make sure pets have a warm place to sleep. All pets, including small caged pets, need to be kept warm and away from drafts.

Drivers are advised to blow the car horn or bang on the hoods and sides of the car before driving to alert cats that may be taking advantage of the engine's warmth.