

Outdoor Pets Need Extra Care During Winter

Snow and cold could pose increased health risks.

Pets should get extra food to get through tough winters in snowy or cold regions, and outdoor pets need particular attention to stay healthy during cold weather, according to veterinarians at Argosy University.

Family pets require the same necessities as people in the wintertime shelter, food and water, says Dr. Michael Hulse, a veterinary instructor at Argosy University/Twin Cities. Even dogs with thick winter coats are not equipped to survive prolonged periods outside in the winter without shelter.

Frostbite is one of the biggest problems for outdoor pets during freezing weather, and cats are particularly susceptible. Veterinarians often see it on pets ears, feet and tails. To avoid that danger, pets should always have access to a shelter with an insulated floor, or at least straw bedding, Hulse said.

Hulse offered several other tips to keep pets safe during winter in cold climates:

Bang on your car hood or honk your horn prior to starting the vehicle; it will scare off any cats attempting to warm themselves on the engine block.

Provide a warm, safe place that a pet can rest outdoors; it should be well-insulated, and you should offer high-caloric food and fresh drinking water.

Clean your pets feet when they come indoors; the chemicals used to de-ice streets and sidewalks can irritate their paws.

Be careful if using artificial snow and tree preservatives, as they can be poisonous for pets.

Use heated water bowls (available from pet stores), or use ceramic or plastic bowls instead of metal.

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