



Paw Prints

Jodi Schneider
Columnist

Cold weather safety for your pets

This winter in Sisters Country the temperatures have been above normal, but we may finally be headed into colder weather. It's your job as a pet parent to keep your furry friend warm and safe. After all, Rover can't quite put on a coat and scarf for his morning walk or tell you when he wants to go indoors on a blustery day.

Frigid weather can be hard on pets, just like people. It is important to prepare your furry friend for the cold weeks ahead.

It's a misconception that dogs are more resistant than people to cold weather because of their fur. Some dogs are more susceptible

to the cold than others. Short-coated, thin, elderly, or very young dogs get cold more quickly — so adjust the amount of time they stay outside. If your dog enjoys being outdoors and you will be outside longer than a few minutes, consider putting on a sweater or coat to keep him warm. Hypothermia and frostbite pose major risks to dogs in winter, so remember, if it's too cold for you, it's probably too cold for your furry friend!

So, how cold is too cold? Dogs should be okay until the temperature drops to below 45 degrees. At that point they may start to "feel" cold depending on their breed. At 32 degrees small dogs, elderly dogs and others with health conditions should stay indoors.

Just as you bundle up for cold weather, your pooch will benefit from a winter wardrobe.

If your pooch is whining, shivering, seems anxious, slows down or stops moving, get him back inside very quickly because he is showing signs of hypothermia. If you suspect frostbite, seek veterinary attention.

During winter walks, your dog's paws can pick up all kinds of toxic chemicals — salt, antifreeze, or de-icers. Be sure to wipe off your dog's paws when you return from walks to prevent

him from licking it off and becoming sick. Remember to check for signs of injury, such as cracked or bleeding paw pads. Purchase pet-safe de-icers for your home to keep your furry friend safe.

Many pets become lost in the winter due to snow and ice, which can mask smells and make it difficult for animals to sniff their way home. Make sure that your pooch has ID tags and a microchip with your up-to-date information. Due to Daylight Savings, some people must walk their dogs in the dark after work. Keep yourself and your dog safe by wearing reflective gear (clothing, leash, and collar) and keep your dog close when walking on the street.

Just as dogs can suffer heatstroke in hot cars, cold cars can also be deadly. A car can act as a refrigerator in winter, holding in the cold which can lead to frostbite, hypothermia, and death.

The use of rat and mouse poisons increase this time of year, as rodents seek shelter from the cooler temperatures by attempting to move indoors. Rodenticides are highly toxic to pets and if ingested could be fatal. If you must use these products, please do so with extreme caution and put



PHOTO BY JODI SCHNEIDER

A little extra work makes winter much safer and more comfortable for your pet.

them in places inaccessible to your pets.

Cats often sleep in the wheel wells of cars during the winter months to keep warm. If you start your car and a cat is sleeping on your tire, it can be severely hurt or even killed by moving engine parts. Prevent injuries by banging loudly on your hood or honking the horn before starting your

car. This will wake up the cat and give her a chance to escape before starting the vehicle.

Winter can be a beautiful time of year. It can be dangerous as well — but it doesn't have to be. If you take some precautions, you and your furry friend can have a fabulous time dashing through the snow together.

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