



Winter storms can impact animal health as well as human health. Pets exposed to prolonged cold and wind chills increase their risk for cold-related illnesses. Prepare now to protect your pets during winter storms.

Before the Winter Storm

- **Stock up on food for your pet.**
 - In the event of road closures, be sure to have extra food available for your pet.
 - If your pet is on continual medications, have at least a two-week supply on hand.
- **Identification.**
 - All pets should have some sort of identification (collar with tag, microchip).
 - Take a photo of the pet and keep it with the medical records.
 - Include any proof of ownership materials (e.g., registration, proof of purchase, adoption records, microchip information).

During a Winter Storm

- **Bring your pets inside immediately.**
 - Bring pets indoors, into the house or garage, to provide warm shelter.
 - Keep pets away from any alternate heating sources being used to avoid burns.
- **If you can't bring them inside,**
 - Provide adequate shelter to keep them warm.
 - NEVER leave your pet chained outside or enclosed in a way they cannot escape danger.
 - Pets that live outdoors should be fed a bit more in the winter because they need the extra calories to stay warm.
 - Remember to provide fresh water and ensure that the water does not freeze.
 - Check often to make sure that access to food and water is not blocked by snow drifts, ice or other obstacles.
 - Use a plastic dish to prevent your pet's tongue from freezing to a metal bowl.
- **If your pet goes outdoors,**
 - Most long-haired or full-coated dogs do fine in winter with just their own, natural coats.
 - Shorter-coated dogs need a dog coat to protect them from the wind, snow, and cold.
 - Check their paws upon their return to make sure that ice is not building up between the toes, or that salt or ice melt is not irritating the skin.
 - Never leave your pet alone in the car for prolonged periods during the winter. Your car can become a freezer quickly.
 - Check underneath your car's hood for small animals (like cats) that may have crawled inside seeking warmth.

Winter-Related Illnesses

Prolonged exposure to low temperatures, wind or moisture can result in cold-related illness for pets.

- **If any of these conditions are suspected, SEEK VETERINARY CARE IMMEDIATELY!**
- **Antifreeze.**
 - Ingesting anti-freeze can be fatal for your dog or cat. If you spill some, soak it up immediately.
- **Frostbite.**
 - Pets can get frostbite very easily on the ears, tail and paws. If your pet goes outdoors, be aware of the temperature and wind chill.
 - Signs may not be immediately obvious and may not show for several days.
 - **Signs:** white, waxy or pale appearance to extremities (e.g., toes, nose, ears, tail); skin is cold and numb with loss of feeling; sloughing of skin.
- **Hypothermia.**
 - Occurs when the core body temperature drops to a level at which normal muscle and brain functions are impaired.
 - Pets can become hypothermic after being in cold temperatures for long periods of time or from being wet in cold conditions.
 - **Signs:** extreme shivering • slow, shallow breathing, • gums may be pale or blue, • animal may be unresponsive
 - Warm the animal's body **SLOWLY** and start with the body core first, **NOT** the extremities.
 - Do not give the animal anything **HOT** to drink. Warm broth or food is better.

Development of this educational material was by the Center for Food Security and Public Health with funding from the Multi-State Partnership for Security in Agriculture MOU-2010-HSEMD-004. June 2010.

