

WINTER PET CARE FOR YOUR CAT

Humans aren't the only species that can suffer from the cold, icy blasts of winter. Here are some tips to help make sure that your pet stays healthy and comfortable all winter.

If your cat goes outdoors make sure your cat is acclimated to the weather and doesn't stay out too long when it's freezing outside. Provide a warm safe nesting space to provide shelter from the cold.

Cats are attracted to antifreeze because of its sweet taste, but the ethylene glycol that antifreeze contains is deadly if ingested. Early symptoms of antifreeze poisoning include vomiting, depression, lack of coordination and weakness. If you suspect that your pet has ingested any amount of antifreeze, take it to a veterinarian immediately. To prevent accidental poisoning, store antifreeze in an inaccessible area and do not allow your pet to have access to the garage or to other areas where cars dripping antifreeze may be parked.



Beware of frostbite! Frostbite occurs most frequently on the tips of the ears, on the paw pads, and on the tail. If you think that your cat may be suffering from frostbite, consult your veterinarian right away. If your vet is not immediately available, you can start treating your pet at home. Warm frostbitten tissues by immersing the area in warm-not hot-water. When the infected areas become flushed, discontinue warming, and gently dry the area. Never rub or massage frostbitten tissues. Wrap the area with a clean, dry, non-adhering bandage. Be sure to protect your pet from further exposure to the cold, because frostbitten tissues are more susceptible than others to repeated freezing.

A well-nourished cat is better equipped to cope with harsh weather. If your cat spends much time outdoors in cold weather he may require up to 50% more energy just to maintain normal body temperature. Serve extra portions of high-quality pet food to these pets. Animals can't burn calories without a fresh supply of water, and if they can't burn calories, they can't stay warm. A heated water dish is a great solution to providing fresh water to outside pets. However, inside pets may be getting less exercise in winter months and may require less food to prevent packing on extra pounds.

Cats love a warm spot to curl up for a cat nap. Protect your cat from fireplaces, wood stoves and space heaters. Indoor pets will appreciate a warm bed to make them more comfortable in colder rooms and drafty floors. Outdoors, you can also provide a warm, dry bed by placing a sturdy enclosed box in a sheltered area, such as a barn, garage, or porch, and by lining the box with a dry rug or towel. Be sure to check the bedding periodically to make sure it is clean and dry.

Snow, ice, road salt and mud can irritate your pet's feet. Ice-melting chemicals can irritate and burn the pads of your cat's feet and can cause serious injury if ingested. Use EARTH-SAFE, a pet safe, child safe, environment safe ice melt on your sidewalks. Keep paw wipes handy to use when your cat comes back inside. Bag Balm salve works wonders to sooth and help heal sore pads.

Dry skin. Heated homes contribute to dry skin and dander problems. Limit baths to only when needed to remove grease, oil or dirt, and always use a good shampoo and conditioner made specifically for cats. A high quality food with extra fatty acids and vitamins will help promote a glossy, healthy coat.

Keep your cat's coat well groomed. Matted fur won't properly protect your pet from the cold. Frequent grooming will help remove dander and loose hair before it matts.

More cats are injured by fan belts during cold weather months than at other times of the year. Because outdoor cats often seek warmth on or under warm car hoods, honk your horn or check under your hood before starting your car.

Paying close attention to your cat's needs during temperature drops can ensure your pet's safety and comfort and help avoid many wintertime accidents – So you and your pet can enjoy Wisconsin's winters.