



Alabama Veterinary Medical Association

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Protecting People, Pets and Livestock - Yesterday, Today and Always.

PRESS RELEASE

Prepare Pets to Avoid Cold Weather Dangers

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MONTGOMERY, Ala. - As temperatures are expected to drop into the teens later this week, the Alabama Veterinary Medical Association wants to remind pet owners to be prepared to protect their pets against the severe cold. As the cold weather sets in, we need to think about our pets and how they will be affected by the change in temperature. Below are a few tips to help ensure our pets will be safe when the cold weather arrives.

- 1) Although some pets are conditioned to cold weather, veterinary experts agree that you should bring outdoor pets indoors if the temperature drops below 20 degrees Fahrenheit.
- 2) Puppies, kittens, and short haired pets should come inside anytime the temperature goes below 40 degrees. They should also be protected when they go outdoors. Consider getting your pet a coat or sweater with a high collar or turtleneck. They should be covered from the base of the tail to the belly. If your puppy is sensitive to the cold consider using indoor training pads. If your dog is sensitive due to age, illness or breed type, take your pet outdoors only to relieve himself. If it's too cold outside for you, it probably is too cold for the pet to stay out as well.
- 3) For pets with long hair, proper grooming is essential to help them maintain a layer of warming air within their coat. Pets who are heavily matted cannot keep themselves as warm.
- 4) If your pet must stay outdoors, be sure to provide adequate shelter for your pet. A good "house" will have three enclosed sides, will be elevated off the ground, and will contain generous amounts of bedding such as straw or hay.
- 5) In cold weather, bigger is not always better. A house just big enough for your pet will warm up faster and retain heat better than something that is too big.
- 6) Your pet will need access to fresh water. Use heated water bowls so that their water does not freeze, and replenish them frequently. Lack of enough water can cause dehydration which can lead to kidney failure.
- 7) Antifreeze is a common and deadly pet poison during colder months. It has a sweet taste to pets, so they will readily lap up any spilled material. If you spill antifreeze, dilute the area well with water and sweep excess water into a rocky or sandy area. Cover area with soil to keep pets from licking at the rocks. If you suspect your pet has consumed any antifreeze at all, you must contact your veterinarian immediately!
- 8) Always wipe their paws if they have been exposed to areas with ice melts. This can cause blistering on their paws and contains chemicals which are dangerous for pets to ingest. Keep an eye out for limping, excessive licking of their feet and redness to the skin areas between pads.
- 9) Cats should be kept inside in extreme cold. Also remember, cats love to warm up underneath car hoods. If your car is kept outdoors, or if cats have access to your garage, be sure to pound on the hood of the car prior to starting it. Many cats are killed or injured grievously by fan belts and moving engine parts.
- 10) Our pets suffer from frostbite and hypothermia just like we do. Consider keeping dogs on a leash when they go outside and make sure they are wearing ID tags. Many curious dogs off leash will explore "frozen" retention ponds, lakes or streams and fall through the ice into frigid water.
- 11) Pets should NEVER be left alone in vehicles. Leaving a pet in a vehicle is always dangerous, and in cold weather it increases the potential for carbon monoxide poisoning or hypothermia.
- 12) Older pets may suffer more from arthritis during these months. Outdoor exposure should be limited during extreme weather. Ask your veterinarian about ways to help keep your senior pet comfortable during the winter.
- 13) Monitor all pets around wood-burning stoves, fireplaces, electric blankets and space heaters. These can cause severe burns!

Pet owners should always keep an eye on the forecast so we are aware of inclement weather and can plan accordingly. If your pet is past due for a visit, start off the new year and see your veterinarian for a "winter check up". Their advice and expertise can help keep your pet safe and warm!

Founded in 1907, The Alabama Veterinary Medical Association is comprised of approximately 725 veterinarians from around the state, all committed to protecting people, pets and livestock – yesterday, today and always.

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