



Pets and Weather

Keeping Your Pet Safe in All Weather

No Place Like Home

No matter what the weather, the best way to ensure comfort and safety of your pet is to keep it where you are comfortable and safe – in your house. Consider offering your pet unlimited access to your house during weather extremes such as the hot, humid days of summer or the icy, cold days of winter.

As pets spend more time indoors, other issues may arise.

Many pets who aren't used to being indoors may not know the rules and demonstrate normal, but destructive, behaviors such as chewing and clawing. Therefore, make sure you keep house plants and valuables out of reach.

Pets with access to the outdoors during warm weather may also bring in unwanted guests – fleas. And a change in seasons usually brings with it a change in coat. Regular brushing can reduce the amount of pet hair on your rugs and furniture.

Summer

Summer heat puts extra stress on your pet's body. Because of this, it's best to keep your pet inside where there is access to shade, water and cool air whether from open windows or air conditioning.

If your pet is outside all day, make sure he has a shady area, preferably on grass since pavement tends to heat up in warm weather. Check at different times to make sure the area is shaded all day.

You may need to provide extra water in summer. Try larger water containers, or special devices that attach to an easy to reach faucet for unlimited access.

Most veterinarians don't recommend shaving dogs or cats, since the hair helps them insulate against heat. Heavy-coated breeds of dogs and cats are especially prone to heat illnesses, especially in hot, humid climates. Many heavy-coated dogs appreciate a wading pool to loll in on extra hot days.

Other animals with an increased risk of overheating include senior pets, puppies and kittens, working pets, and flat-faced breeds (Pugs, Bulldogs, Pekes, Persians).

If your dog or cat is used to running errands with you in your car, leave it home during hot summer days. Even with the windows cracked, your car can reach 130 degrees inside in less than 30 minutes. Don't risk giving your pet heat stroke!

Treating Overheating

The best way to treat overheating is prevention. However, if you notice that your pet has abnormally rapid breathing, tremors, muscle weakness, vomiting, or fainting, your pet may have heat exhaustion.

Wet your pet with cool – not cold – water, place in an area with a breeze, and transport your pet to the veterinarian immediately.

Winter

Cold weather also brings special care requirements for your pets.

Again, the ideal place for your pets in cold weather is indoors where they have shelter from cold temperatures, drifting snow, and ice. Outdoor pets require shelter with insulation, fresh food and water that doesn't freeze. Consider an electric bowl heater to keep water from freezing outdoors.

If you take your pet outside in snowy or icy weather, be sure to check its paws for cuts or ice balls. After walking on pavement treated with salt or chemical snow removers, wipe your pet's paws with a damp cloth.

Treating Frostbite

Cover chilled pets with blankets and allow them to regain normal body temperature gradually.

Warm water baths – not hot baths – are another good way to gradually warm a chilled pet. Don't use electric blankets or heating pads as they can burn your pet's skin.

If your pet is severely chilled or unresponsive, take him to your veterinarian immediately.

Other Winter Concerns

Antifreeze (containing ethylene glycol) poses a special danger to pets in winter. Both dogs and cats are attracted by the sweet taste, and mere teaspoonfuls can cause kidney damage or death.

If you keep cars and pets in your garage, be sure your radiator does not leak. If you suspect your pet has ingested antifreeze, contact your veterinarian immediately.

Treatment within two to four hours can save some pets.

Carbon monoxide poisoning is another potential problem for pets kept in the garage with vehicles during winter months. Never start your car and let it warm up in the garage unless you remove your pet during this time.

