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Cold Weather Pet Care

Winter is hardest on the outside pet. Cold weather combined with high humidity and rain can make your pet very uncomfortable. In some cases it can even put his life in danger.

When the temperature drops too low it's time to bring the pet in the house. How low is too low? That depends on the breed of dog you have and the type of coat the dog has. A Husky or Chow can stand lower temperatures than a Boxer or a Doberman. Your veterinarian can tell you when your pet needs to come inside. Physical health and age can also limit the amount of cold your pet can comfortably deal with. Very young puppies and very old animals should not be out in the cold at all. Consider the following for outside pets:

- Roomy dog houses, raised off the ground, with dry bedding can be very effective. It's important that the housing be free from drafts and any dampness.
- Bedding should be cleaned and changed frequently.
- Be sure the pet still has plenty of clean drinking water.
- Make sure your dog's water bowl doesn't freeze over and he can get to the water.

Animals that spend their time indoors don't develop the thick winter coats of their outside cousins. If your pet gets cold easily a sweater could be a great puppy present. Indoor pets also suffer from dry skin in the winter from the effects of central heating. If you notice your pet scratching and flaky skin you might want to call your veterinarian for some remedies.

Cats hate cold weather. Most cats are very good at finding the warmest place in the house. Warm clothes dryers can be very tempting for the chilled kitty. Make sure you leave your dryer closed and check it before you turn it on. Electric blankets and heating pads are designed for indoor use only and should never be used outside or where there is any water or dampness.

If your pet does get too cold bring him into a warm area. Don't use hot water to thaw toes or ears or rub any frozen areas. This could cause more harm to already damaged skin. Contact your veterinarian or take the pet to an emergency clinic immediately.

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