

Keep pets safe in winter

The Pet Practice encourages pet owners to follow these safety tips to protect pets from the harmful elements of winter.

■ **Keep pets warm.** The best way to do this is to keep them indoors; for outdoor pets, a protective shelter is necessary. The outdoor shelter should be supported three inches above the ground for ultimate warmth and should measure only a foot longer and three inches higher than the pet's body. This may appear too small for the pet, but making it snug allows the animal to warm itself from its own body heat.

■ **Avoid freezing temperatures.** Don't leave young animals outside during freezing temperatures. Carefully observe pets when they are outside and watch for behaviors like shivering to make sure they don't exhibit signs of distress. Older pets in particular are more susceptible to cold weather dangers because their temperature-regulating mechanisms worsen as they get older. All pets are at risk during the winter, but younger pets, older pets and pets with thinner hair have the greatest risk during cold weather due to decreased insulation.

■ **Increase pet's caloric intake.** During winter months, consult a veterinarian about the possibility of increasing the pet's caloric intake. On average, pets need 50 percent more energy in the

winter, which comes from the food they eat.

■ **Feed cats a diet low in magnesium.** A diet low in magnesium prevents the buildup of crystals in the urine of cats, which is one of the causes of feline urinary syndrome, especially during winter months.

■ **Prevent pet's water from freezing.** Keep the pet's water supply replenished to keep it from freezing. During the winter, never let pets drink or eat out of a metal container. Instead, use a plastic container that will prevent an animal's tongue from sticking to the metal.

■ **Keep antifreeze out of pet's reach.** Hose down areas where an antifreeze leak may have occurred. A pet's contact with antifreeze can be deadly. If an animal drinks (or even licks) antifreeze, its kidneys could shut down. If a pet has ingested antifreeze, call a veterinarian immediately.

■ **Beware of burning salt and ice-melting chemicals.** Avoid the pet's contact with these products, as they burn feet or paws. Be sure to wipe or wash the pet's feet immediately if they are exposed to salt or chemicals.

■ **Clean the snow out from between the pet's toes.** Prolonged periods of snow in between a pet's toes while playing outdoors can lead to frostbite.

Adopt-a-pet



Max: Max is a 9-month-old male-neutered Shepherd mix. He is a very sweet dog who is already housebroken. He still likes to jump up sometimes so he would be best suited for a home with children over age 10. He loves everybody he meets and will show you much affection. Max (No. 62689) and other pets are available at the Michigan Humane Society Rochester Hills shelter, 3600 Auburn Road. Call (810) 852-7420 between noon and 7:30 p.m. Wednesday-Friday and 10 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Saturday-Sunday.

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