

MHS Gives Tips On Winterizing Your Dog



As you raise the thermostat and listen to the cold winds blasting icy particles against your snug storm windows, give a thought to your dog.

Is his house winterized too? The Michigan Humane Society (MHS) reminds pet owners to make certain that their dog and his house, if he is to be left outdoors, are prepared for the cold weather.

In most cases, it's all right for a dog to be kept outdoors during the winter months — if he's used to it. The average dog is able to acclimatize himself to the weather, but on a gradual basis.

Naturally, a dog that's indoors most of the time shouldn't be put out for too long on a cold winter day. And, conversely, a dog with a heavy, thick coat would be most uncomfortable if made to stay indoors all day.

When a dog is left outdoors there is one requirement that must not be overlooked. It is most important that the animal has shelter available at all times.

IN PREPARING a doghouse for the cold weather or constructing a new one, the MHS suggests that dog owners check the following:

Size: Because the doghouse will be heated by the animal's own body heat, it should not be too large. A good rule to follow is to make the house a little bigger than the dog's body, measured diagonally from his nose to his hind paws or from his front paws to his tail.

Construction: The doghouse should be built on the downwind side of a structure, such as a garage, house wall or fence, so as to prevent the wind from blowing in. In addition, there should be a flap covering the doorway or double protection at the door

like a layer of canvas hung just behind the regular opening.

The roof should be hinged or completely removable so that it is easier to clean the house. Also, make certain that the roof does not leak.

For warmth and protection from drafts, the floor should be off the ground about three or four inches. This can be

done by setting it on a styrofoam pad.

The doghouse should be built of plywood or particle board, insulated with styrofoam and covered with waterproof roofing material. Avoid fiberglass insulators.

HEAT AND INSULATION: Blankets, an old mattress, straw and shredded

newspaper will all offer some degrees of comfort.

A 100-watt light bulb can be put in the doghouse to provide some heat, but it must be thoroughly protected so the dog cannot knock it down or chew the cord.

Here are some additional cold weather precautions from the Michigan Humane Society to provide your pet with maximum protection this winter:

1. Inspect the doghouse frequently to make certain

that his food and water aren't frozen. Change the water often.

2. Feed him better — more carbohydrates — and more often to give him additional energy.

3. Watch out for toxic snow melting substances which could make him sick and sting his paws.

4. Check his paws frequently for ice. It can be very painful for a dog when the ice on frozen paws begins melting.

5. Put a sweater on your pet. It's not a silly idea; it'll keep him warm.

6. A garage is not an acceptable overnight shelter for a dog unless it's heated.

The Humane Society is offering a free brochure on "How to Build A Doghouse" to all pet owners who are interested in a specific plan and diagram to help them construct a doghouse. Simply request the brochure by writing to the Michigan Humane Society, 7401 Chrysler Drive, Detroit, 48211.



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