

Pets need a little extra care through the winter

By Julie Brown
staff writer

JUST LIKE their human counterparts, pets need a little extra tender loving care during the winter.

"If there are dogs being kept outside, there are things owners need to think about," said Linda Reider, director of education for the Humane Society of Huron Valley.

Dogs should be acclimated to the cold weather before the worst of it arrives, she said. Doghouses should be insulated and small enough for the dog.

"So bigger is not necessarily better."

A dark color is best for the exterior of a doghouse, Reider said, because it will attract the sun's rays. Clean bedding, such as straw that's changed frequently, will help a dog stay comfortable in the winter.

A CURTAIN or flap to cover a doghouse door is a good idea, said Dr. Mary Beth Leininger, a Plymouth veterinarian. The door can be positioned to one side a bit, cutting down on the wind that gets into the doghouse.

"Dogs that are kept outside constantly need to have their coats kept in excellent condition," said Leininger, who practices with her husband, Dr. Steven Leininger, at the Plymouth Veterinary Hospital. Extra brushing and combing will help maintain a dog's coat and provide additional insulation.

Typically, dogs who stay outside during the winter need somewhat greater amounts of food, she said. The quality of nutrition's also important, and veterinarians can advise pet owners on what food to buy.

"We know pretty much the stuff that's good and the stuff that isn't," Leininger said.

Pets who stay outside in the winter need a steady supply of water. It's helpful to take warm water out to a dog at least two or three times daily, Leininger said, as water will freeze quickly outdoors.

Heated water bowls are another option for dogs who stay outside, said the Humane Society of Huron Valley's Reider.

Few cats are outdoors all the time in the winter, Leininger said, but cats can still be injured in the winter. In cold weather, cats may crawl under a car and work their way toward the warm engine.

CATS CAN then be injured or killed when the engine is started. Honking a car's horn or knocking on the hood before starting the engine can alert a cat that it's time to get moving.

Pet owners and others need to be careful when disposing of antifreeze, said Jackie Kunze, assistant shelter manager at the Michigan Humane Society's Westland shelter.

The smell and taste of antifreeze attracts pets, but antifreeze can be deadly. It's essential not to leave antifreeze around where pets can get into it, Kunze said.

Pets are at somewhat greater risk of respiratory infections in the cold weather, Leininger said. Pet owners should be careful about leaving pets accustomed to being inside outdoors for too long.

"Most house dogs do not want to stay out for long periods of time," Kunze said. Dogs who spend most of their time indoors don't have heavy coats to protect them from the cold.

"It's kind of like us going out in the wintertime with summer clothes on," Leininger said. Specially-designed coats and sweaters can help

pets get through the winter comfortably. Care should also be taken in the winter not to clip a dog's coat too short.

It's possible for dogs to get chemical burns on the pads of their feet after walking or running through road salt, Leininger said. It's a good idea for a pet owner who goes out jogging with a dog to wash and dry the dog's feet right away.

DOGS WHO walk on ice can have ice balls build up on their feet, Reider said. It's helpful to keep a dog's hair trimmed in that area. The heat from a pet owner's fingers can be used to melt those ice balls.

Domesticated pets have an especially

difficult time staying warm when the temperature drops, Reider said.

"No animal should be outside if the temperature drops below zero degrees Fahrenheit," Some pet owners opt to put their pet in a basement or garage when it's extremely cold. Older dogs and sick dogs should sleep indoors in the winter.

Other wintertime tips for pet care include:

- A pet's outdoor area should be kept clean, and feces picked up regularly.
- Pets should be kept up to date on vaccinations.
- Pet owners should be careful not to overfeed sedentary dogs.

• Caged birds should be kept indoors and away from drafts. If windows and doors aren't well-insulated, birds may be affected by drafts.

• Sufficient supplies of birdseed can be put out regularly for wild birds.

Leininger, Kunze and Reider are all pet owners and animal lovers. They take good care of their pets and encourage other people to do the same.

"Most people that have pets have them because they love the animal," Leininger said, but some don't know what's involved in caring for a pet.

"I think most people are really conscientious about their pets," she said.



Cheerleaders stop at hospital on way to national competition

Thirteen Varsity Rocket Cheerleaders motored to Cleveland Saturday to pick up Kimberly Pierce last weekend, who makes the full contingent of their 14-member squad. The East Middle School student had been confined to Rainbow Babies in Children's Hospital, in Ohio since Oct. 2.

Deanna Hight, a Rocket cheerleader for four years and now in her third year of coaching the squad, said "Kimmy is getting out of the hospital just in time for heavy practice in preparation for national competition. We're practicing two hours a day, three days a week. She's quick. She can pick up fast whatever she's missed."

While the cheerleaders were in the hospital, the squad, including Kimberly, entertained children in a few of the wards with some of the cheers that qualified them for national competition.

The squad of 13-year-olds won a First Division rating in competition among junior high school students while they were attending cheerleading camp last summer, which put them in the running for national competition which begins

Dec. 27 in Kansas City.

Kimberly is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Randy Pierce of Farmington Hills. She, her brother Brett, and

her twin sister, Kristie, who died last year, were National Poster Children for the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation in 1982.

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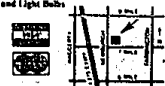
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