



ANIMAL ANTICS

HOUSEHOLD PETS AT WINTER TIME

So far the weather in the UK has been remarkably mild. However, with the majority of winter still to come, owners should be aware of their pets winter needs. Below are some key points and common sense measures:

General

- Check on your pet often and observe its behaviour.
- Be sure your pet has a warm/dry place out of the elements, particularly after exercise and while resting.
- Check water regularly to make sure it hasn't frozen.
- Move outdoor hutches to a sheltered location (garage/shed) or provide a pull down flap over the front of the cage (be aware that good ventilation is required to minimise chest infections).
- Give outdoor pets such as rabbits extra food (cold pets use more calories to keep warm) and extra bedding for burrowing.
- Sick dogs and those with thin fur, such as Yorkshire Terriers/Greyhounds, benefit from wearing clothing when outdoors.
- Winter is a lean time for foxes and badgers and hunger may make them bolder than usual. Ensure hutches are sturdy enough to survive the attentions of a desperate predator.

Health Conditions

- Frostbite can be a problem for your pet (skin may turn reddish/white/grey and may be scaly/sloughing). Always remove ice and snow from your pet's paws/coat after exercise and if you suspect frostbite, take your pet to a warm place and **call your veterinary practitioner immediately**.
- Arthritis can develop in the colder weather to animals of any age. A fracture can also make the bone susceptible to arthritis after the injury is healed, and overweight pets suffer from arthritis more than their normal weight counterparts. If your pet is having trouble getting up or laying down, navigating the stairs, or has started to snap or cry when picked up, a visit to the vet is in order.
- The elderly and young are more vulnerable to the cold. Be aware of debilitated animals, especially if they have lost condition recently. Weighing your pets regularly to monitor body condition should be a part of your home care routine.

Dangers

- Unguarded home heaters, exposed flames or hot surfaces are a recipe for singed hair or burns, particularly to dogs.
- Dogs on iced ponds are a real danger to themselves and owners who try to rescue them if they break through and fall in.
- Cats are known to climb into vehicle engines for warmth. Before starting your vehicle knock on the bonnet and honk the horn.

Poisons

- Make sure your car radiator does not leak. Most commercial antifreeze, screen washes and de-icers contain a sweet tasting, but highly toxic chemical called ethylene glycol. Consuming as little as one teaspoon of antifreeze can be deadly to a small dog. If a cat walks through a puddle of antifreeze, then licks its paws this can also be fatal. Signs of poisoning are nervousness and vomiting - **call your veterinary practitioner immediately**.
- Prolonged contact with a variety of salts and chemicals used to clear ice on roads and pathways can irritate feet and pads. Dogs ingest significant amounts of this material when grooming after a walk and can develop digestive or other metabolic problems. Smart comfortable "designer" dog boots are now available that can protect susceptible feet, although a good wash and dry will work equally well.
- Carbon monoxide poisoning is another danger. If you have a pet in your garage/car port, do not start your car to let it warm up inside.

COURTESY OF PET PATROL 365

01892 771498 / 07974 728967

www.petpatrol365.co.uk