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CVMA Advises Pet Owners How to Keep Pets Safe in Winter Weather *Chicago Veterinary Medical Association provides helpful cold weather safety tips*

It's no secret that the Midwest has four distinct seasons, which means managing extreme weather with blistering summer heat and raw winter cold. For pets, the extremes can be particularly dangerous and damaging to sensitive paws, joints, skin, and fur. The Chicago Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA) wants to provide pet owners with helpful tips on how to best care for their furry friends this winter.

"Similar to people, pets have varying tolerances when it comes to cold weather," explained Dr. Marina Jaworsky, CVMA Board President. "Understand your pet's specific needs and abilities for managing temperature extremes. It's also important to recognize that some medical issues like arthritis can be aggravated in cold weather."

Here are some additional considerations for keeping pets safe and comfy this time of year:

- **Indoors is best** – Keep cats and dogs indoors during cold weather. Understand that they are susceptible to frostbite and hypothermia, just like their owners. If it's not possible to keep pets indoors, ensure that they have a shelter that's warm and windproof with unlimited access to fresh, drinkable water.
- **Car safety** – Just as summer's scorching heat can be deadly to pets that are left alone in cars, winter can be just as dangerous since cars tend to hold in the cold, which can cause pets to freeze to death. Additionally, be aware that warm car engines can be an inviting source of heat for outdoor animals during the winter. Check the underside of your car, knock on the hood, or honk your horn prior to starting your engine to be sure that a cat or other critter isn't nestled inside.

- **Be on paw patrol** – Check your pup’s feet for any signs of cold-weather damage, as tender paws can crack or bleed. Additionally, toes can accumulate ice during walks, which can inhibit a dog’s mobility or cause injury. De-icing salt also can hurt pet paws, so consider using booties to help protect your pet during walks and consider investing in pet-safe salt products for your own home.
- **Towel off** – It’s a good idea to towel or wash off feet, legs, and body to ensure that de-icing chemicals were not picked up by your dog while on a walk. Poisoning can occur if your pet licks off these toxins during their self-care routines. Also, when at home, be sure to clean up any chemical spill quickly – like antifreeze – so pets don’t accidentally ingest it.
- **Consider an extra coat** – Yes, pets come with a fur coat, but short hair dogs might enjoy the extra insulation provided by a sweater or dog jacket. Just be sure to suit up your dog with a dry coat each time because putting on damp or wet sweaters or coats will only make your dog colder.
- **Stay off the ice** – Keep your safety as well as your pet’s top of mind and stay away from frozen ponds, lakes, and other bodies of water when on walks with your dog. You never know how solid the ice is and you and your dog could find yourselves in a deadly situation should the ice break.
- **Plan ahead** – Winter weather brings the threat of blizzards and power outages. It’s good practice to prepare a disaster/emergency kit for your family and to include your pet’s needs in your plan. Have enough food, water, and medicine conveniently assembled and readily accessible for a minimum of five days – just in case.

Lastly, CVMA recommends making sure that your pet’s collar is well-fitting and includes current identification and owner contact information. Pets can become lost more easily during the winter season as the usual, familiar scents that pets use to orient themselves to home can be masked by snow and ice. Ensuring that your pet’s identification and your contact information is up to date can help reunite you and your pet more quickly.

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About the Chicago Veterinary Medical Association: Chicago Veterinary Medical Association is a professional network with a longstanding tradition that connects more than 1,000 veterinarians with comprehensive resources that support their continued development as champions of animal health while encouraging the fostering of the human-animal bond.

About the Chicago Veterinary Medical Foundation: The CVMF, established in 2009, is a 501[©]3 charity that works with Chicagoland veterinarians to provide financial assistance to pet families in need by helping with the costs of their pet's urgent, unexpected medical and surgical bills. The Foundation's work plays a vital role in strengthening the human-animal bond by helping sick and suffering pets get well again.