



Top Winter Safety Tips for Dog Owners

Despite warmer-than-normal winter temperatures this season, winter is still coming, with periods of snow and cold temperatures predicted across North America by the National Weather Service and Environment Canada.

Here are three tips for dog owners to help keep their pets winter-safe:

1. Chemical Deicers Can Be Toxic

While more people than ever are using pet-friendly deicers these days, dangerous chemical deicers remain widely used on sidewalks and streets, and have varying degrees of toxicity for dogs, depending on the ingredients and amounts ingested.

Chemical deicers containing the antifreeze ethylene glycol are a deadly poison for dogs. As a standard deicing agent found in antifreeze and winter windshield washer fluid, ethylene glycol has a sweet taste that many dogs find irresistible—and it only takes a small amount to cause irreparable kidney damage or even failure, leading to death.

After any exposure to chemical deicers, wipe off your dog's feet with a damp towel. When using chemical deicers, read the product labels carefully and follow all recommended precautions.

2. Protect Against Frostbite

Paws, ears, and tails – like people's hands, ears, and faces – are susceptible to frostbite. To protect paws, you can easily find dog boots in a wide variety of styles online and in pet stores. In addition to helping the paws stay clean, warm, and dry, dog boots often come with soles, which provide added traction in icy conditions.

If your dog doesn't like boots (or needs time to get used to them), be sure to remove any caked ice and snow from your dog's paws as soon as possible. Also, keep your dog's nails trimmed. Long nails force the toes to splay (spread apart), which increases the risk that snow or ice will accumulate between the pads.

Frostbitten skin may appear reddish, grayish, bluish, or white in color. If you suspect your dog has frostbite, seek veterinary care immediately.

3. Wind Chill Can Be Deadly

While some breeds are built better than others to withstand the cold, prolonged exposure to frigid temperatures and wind chill can cause hypothermia, which, when severe enough, can lead to death. Dog jackets can help dogs stay warm in winter weather, but don't wait until your dog starts shivering before realizing it's time to head back!

If your dog lives outdoors, an insulated doghouse is a must. Doghouses need to be elevated a few inches from the ground to prevent moisture from accumulating inside. Carpeting, a blanket or a padded bed should cover the floor. Size-wise, it should be big enough for the dog to stand up, turn around and lie down comfortably, but small enough to contain body heat. The doorway should face away from the prevailing wind, with burlap or canvas hung over the opening to act as a door.

Have a warm and safe winter!