

## **Animals and the Cold**

### *Help your animal fight winter*

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Just like us, our companion animals can suffer from the cold, despite having a thick covering of fur. It is therefore important to take certain precautions to help them better resist the rigors of the cold season.

It is critical to keep in mind that an animal's age will affect its ability to fight off the cold; animals that are either very young or old are less able to withstand the assaults of winter, as are those who do not have a good diet. Also, tethered dogs are more at risk for chilblains and hypothermia. Lastly, even if your dog has long fur, it is important that it be brushed regularly to maximize the insulating properties of his coat.

Dogs that live outside must have a shelter from the wind and cold available to them – it's the law. This shelter must be regularly cleaned and any fecal matter must be removed daily. It must also contain dry food of a good quality and water at an appropriate temperature. It is essential that your dog not eat too much snow. Despite these precautions, it may still be preferable to have the dog come indoors if the temperature lowers considerably: into the house, basement, or, with certain safety measures in place, into the garage.

If using the garage as a shelter, make sure that the animal cannot access any kind of antifreeze solution (containing ethylene glycol, the taste of which is slightly sweet and is attractive to both dogs and cats). Poisoning from carbon monoxide is also a danger; so take the time to remove your animal from the garage when starting your vehicle.

Dogs that usually live indoors must be taken outside for short walks to do their business. Avoid taking them outside for long periods of time when the weather is very cold. Or else, buy them little boots to keep their feet warm and to protect them from calcium and abrasive substances that are spread onto the sidewalks. For short-haired dogs, there are also cute little jackets that will ward off the cold. Be careful, also, of metal collars in cold weather. These may cause injury to the animal if his tongue becomes stuck to it. Use nylon collars in winter instead.

For our feline friends that are accustomed to taking daily excursions, the ideal is to keep them indoors when it is exceedingly cold. Wait until the temperature is milder before offering to let them out again. This way, if your little kitty extends his outdoor trip, he won't be caught by a cold that is too intense.