



WINTER WOES, DOGGIE STYLE



“Let it snow ... let it snow ... let it snow.... ”
Cute song.

That is, it's cute if you have a warm, dry bed inside a real home, or can put on water-ice-and-salt-proof boots.

But winter is horrendous if you:

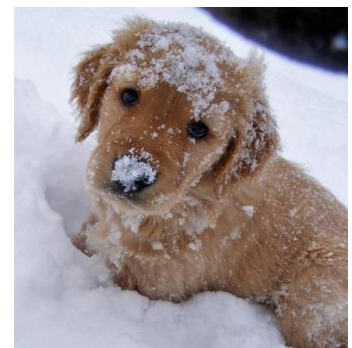
- stay outside all day, or for extended periods
- have to sleep outside in a poorly insulated dog “house”
- have furry paws that stick to ice, clog with snow, or end up covered with salt and chemicals you then lick off -- and develop intestinal and neurological problems

Winter is tough on many of our beloved pets. It can be deceptive and requires extra vigilance of you!

Remember: your pet may have a fur coat, but that doesn't mean they're safe in winter weather!

ALERT 1: FROSTBITE

- Yes, pets get it too
- Have you ever considered what *wet, freezing, salted pavement* feels like on a bare paw? Not fun!
- Ear tips, toes, tails and even legs (extremities with little fat to protect them) get frostbitten more easily than you think. We see a fair amount of it in rescue
- Dogs are just like people – prolonged exposure to extreme weather is dangerous
- The “cuteness factor” prevents us from recognizing the danger -- our dogs roll in the snow, do cute doggie snow angels and are just plain adorable doing it. Surely if they were getting cold they'd let you know, right? Wrong! Many dogs, like many kids, don't have the sense to come in out of the weather if they're busy having fun.





Missouri German Shepherd Rescue (MoGS)
Doggie Health & Wellness Team
Wellness Wednesday Series on Canine Health

• **ALERT 2: WINTER SUN AND CARS**

- We tend to think the air temperature is low so surely it's ok to leave the dog in the car
- Did you know your car can heat up quickly in the winter sun -- causing breathing and other problems?
- Cars also get extremely cold in low temperatures and your dog can get hypothermia

• **ALERT 3: FROZEN OR COLD PONDS/STREAMS**

- Every year dozens of pets die after falling into cold or "frozen" ponds and creeks
- Just because water LOOKS solid doesn't mean it is!
- An emergency vet recently treated an elderly dog who fell in a cold pond and struggled to get out without any help – the dog survived, but barely (and at considerable expense)
- WHAT TO DO: wrap the dog in a towel/blanket to dry, slowly warm him/her, get to vet!

• **ALERT 4: FALLS AND SLICK SURFACES**

- Just like people, dogs can easily "wipe out" on icy patios, paths, porches, stairs, streets
- Just like people, they can be seriously injured by a wipeout
- Just like people, the most common serious injuries from winter falls are legs, hips, backs
- Use extra caution with your pets and slick surfaces -- especially with elderly or ill pets



• **ALERT 5: PAWS**

- Chemicals and salts on snowy streets can cause external injury (*burns, frostbite, injury*) or internal injury (*GI upset, neurological issues*). WIPE YOUR PET'S FEET!
- Keep play times/walks short and sweet – and check frequently for ice/snow buildup in between their toes
- Check their pads often – too much exposure to wet, cold weather can cause the pads to become raw or damaged
- You have shoes. Your dog doesn't.

• **ALERT 6: FEEDING STATIONS FOR BIRDS & OTHERS**

- Dogs are often attracted to bird seed (*intestinal and stomach issues*) and often swallow it in large amounts – but it's hard to digest
- Avoid using "feeding blocks" for birds – they're high in fat and can cause GI upset
- When your pet is outside playing, pick up food you leave on the ground or in easy reach for wild animals. Put it back down again after your dog comes in
- Many people put out suet, crackers, bread and other foods in an effort to help the animals. Be mindful of what you're putting out, and how easily your pet can get to it



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• **ALERT 7: ICE MELT**

- We can't live without it in northern climates, but remember – pets like to EAT this stuff!
- Some pets eat it straight out, but more commonly they lick their paws
- Ice melt can cause severe neurological issues, whether licked or eaten wholesale
- A distraught owner recently rushed their dog to the vet because he had ingested ice melt – and the dog was in a coma
- Other symptoms include GI upset, vomiting, dehydration, electrolyte imbalance
- WIPE YOUR PET'S FEET! Just like kids – be sure they wipe their feet. Only you're doing it for them, as a good pet parent
- Doggie booties with rubber bottoms can help pets get traction and protect their paws
- Kosher salt can be used but can still cause diarrhea and other discomfort
- GOOD (SAFE) ALTERNATIVES: cat litter, bird seed, crushed cereals (cheerios, corn flakes, and other low-sugar grain cereals).
- READ THE LABELS ON PACKAGED ICE MELTS – even the "Pet Friendly" or "Non-Toxic" ones. Many contain some toxic ingredients
- TIPS FOR CHOOSING A PACKAGED ICE MELTER
 - Don't buy the cheapest (have the highest concentration of toxic chemicals).
 - Safe ice melters use more expensive chemicals and are worth the extra expense.
 - Look for a salt and chloride free product
 - Look for a product *without any warning labels* on it. If a product isn't safe for you or your kids, it's not safe for your pets
 - Visit the manufacturer's website and read about the ingredients
 - Do some online research



Be a great doggie parent and winter-proof your pet!
All it takes is a few precautions and a lot of parental vigilance.

KEEP VET PHONE NUMBERS HANDY: Your vet, and the closest emergency vet

ASPCA ANIMAL POISON CONTROL CENTER: (888) 426-4435 Keep this number very close by!
The Center is run by the ASPCA and is flooded during the holidays. A \$65 consultation fee may be applied so have your credit card handy too. <https://www.asPCA.org/pet-care/animal-poison-control/people-foods-avoid-feeding-your-pets>
<http://www.petpoisonhelpline.com/poisons>