

What is hypothermia?

Hypothermia is the condition of the body temperature dropping in an animal because it cannot generate enough body heat for the conditions. In cats and dogs, the normal body temperature is 100 to 102 degrees, and rectal temperatures lower than 95 degrees should be a cause for concern.

Other animals have other normal temperatures, and you should look up the information for any pets you have.

Pets most at risk for hypothermia are the young, elderly, thin animals, hairless and short haired breeds, and animals with matted or wet fur. Additionally, pets with certain medical conditions like diabetes and hypothyroidism are at increased risk.

Environmental risk factors leading to potential hypothermia are exposure to cold temperatures, precipitation or the pet being wet due to bathing or swimming or falling into water, shock or trauma, and prolonged anaesthesia.



Be especially cautious with new born animals. If your pets are pregnant, make sure they have a warm safe place to give birth and during the first few weeks of their lives.

Pet Clothing

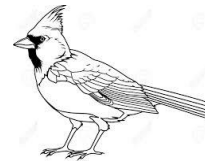
Recently, there has been a greater variety of pet clothes being made, from purely decorative to the supremely functional.

While there are some breeds and types of pets that are fine outdoors in moderate cold (dogs with thick coats like huskies, malamutes, and similar will likely want to go out and play in winter weather), others need some help staying warm.

Even if your pet struggles the first few times you introduce a jacket, it may be useful to continue. There are also booties you can purchase for pet's feet, to help with ice and cold ground. If your pet seems cold in the winter while outside being walked or going to the bathroom, think about buying something to help them stay warm.

Feeding wildlife

If you feed the birds birdseed and suet in the summer, continue this habit in the winter. Winter, due to outdoor conditions, is harder to find food in for wildlife, and the supplementation to their diets will help more of them survive the winter in good condition.



And while wildlife are not pets, and you should not capture them and bring them indoors, they are important to think of in the winter months.

Winter Care Tips for You and Your Pets



PLACE YOUR TOWN INFORMATION HERE

Winter Weather and Your Pet

Winter weather can be rough on pets; the Humane Society of the United State suggests the following tips to help avoid the damage from cold weather.

If possible, generally keep your pets indoors during cold weather. Dogs will need to go out sometimes, to use the bathroom and if they need a walk, but cats can safely be kept indoors during cold months.

Outdoors, cats can easily become lost or stolen, injured or killed by wildlife or unaware motorists, or succumb to hypothermia.

If you have outdoor cats like barn cats, ensure they have access to food and non-frozen water. Consider providing them dry bedding material and small dry enclosures to sleep in during the extreme cold.

If you have outdoor cats, make sure they are not sleeping under, or inside the engine compartment before you start your vehicle, as they could be injured when the engine starts or you move the vehicle.

With both cats and dogs, never leave them outside when temperatures drop precipitously. Bring them inside to stay warm.

Be aware of potential dry skin issues in the winter – if your pet is scratching and licking its skin, it might be because it is itchy. Consider moisturizing pet shampoo, or adding extra fats or oils into the diet.

Do not leave them in a car for a prolonged period, as they could freeze.

Some types of salt used on drives can harm animals – buy the types that are less harmful for the safety of your pet, and wipe off paws when the pet comes indoors so they don't ingest unsafe chemicals (salt, antifreeze, etc).

Antifreeze, which is essential for cars, is highly toxic to animals even in small amounts. Buy one made with propylene glycol not ethylene glycol, as it is less toxic. Antifreeze has a sweet taste that some animals are attracted to, so you must be sure to take care. Store it in a secure location, sealed, and clean up any spills immediately.

Take care if you live near a stream or lake, or have a water feature on your property. Animals have been known to slip, fall through ice, and drown or freeze to death.

Animals should be kept indoors over winter, but if you are determined to have an "outside dog" make sure their shelter is wind and waterproof, on an elevated base facing south and has a flap covering the door. Clean wood Chips or hay provide bedding and stay drier than cloth bedding. Check food and water frequently to ensure they are not frozen. Schedule frequent visits and exercise periods. Remember your dog is a social animal, and may feel depressed or isolated outside alone in the cold.

Other types of pets need extra care in winter too. Keep an eye on pets like chickens that live outdoors – make sure your coop has warming

lamps if needed, and the water container has a heater so it will not freeze.

Make sure the tank heater for fish or cold-blooded reptiles is working and keeping the enclosure warm enough. If you rely on ambient temperature to keep a fish tank warm (like with some betta enclosures) make sure your thermostat is set high enough to keep them comfortable. Sudden changes in temperatures can cause your fish to get sick and die. Have a backup plan in case of power loss.

Keeps birds out of draft prone locations. Be aware that even birds raised in captivity may react to the change in seasons by becoming grumpy or noisy; this is an attempt to warm other birds about the change in conditions.

What to do if animal has hypothermia?

Signs of hypothermia include shivering, depression, and cold feel, tails and ears. They may be curled up tightly to conserve warmth. If they display these signs, the first step is to get your pet to a warmer environment. Make sure the pet is in a dry spot, and try to dry the fur out if possible – this may be challenging with dogs that have heavy double layered fur. Wrap the animal in blankets, but to not rub fur and skin, as frostbite can be present, and this damaged tissue is easily broken.

Take your animal to a vet if possible, and call and ask advice if not (i.e. you are snowed in and should not leave).