



MANOR
VETERINARY CLINIC

Winter Chills



**Top tips to keep your pets
safe, warm and healthy this winter**

As winter sets in, be prepared for the challenges that the cold, dark and icy weather can pose. Keep your pet safe, happy and warm this winter with the following advice.

Hypothermia

Any animal can suffer from hypothermia as the temperature drops. Small breeds, puppies, kittens and older animals are more likely to suffer from dangerously low body temperatures, especially if wet. In severe cases, animals lose the ability to shiver and become disorientated and lethargic. Make sure that your animal has shelter and never leave animals unattended outside or in the car alone.

Fresh water

Animals need to have a supply of fresh water available at all times. Make sure that water bowls aren't frozen over and provide a bowl inside that your pet can access.

Antifreeze

Antifreeze, containing ethylene glycol, smells and tastes sweet. If ingested by cats or dogs, it is highly toxic with a high mortality rate. It is absorbed quickly and signs can occur within a few hours of ingestion.

Acute cases (within 12 hours of ingestion) will show vomiting, depression and ataxia (in-coordination). The chemical forms crystals in the kidneys, which can lead to acute kidney failure even after treatment with intravenous fluids. If you suspect that your animal has come in to contact with antifreeze, contact the vet immediately as it is important to begin treatment as soon as possible.

To reduce exposure of animals to antifreeze, make sure to store in tightly closed containers out of the reach of children or pets and clean up any spills thoroughly. Do not dispose of antifreeze by pouring it down gutters.

Arthritis

Cold weather can aggravate osteoarthritis in dogs and cats. If your pet is having trouble getting up, jumping or navigating the stairs book an appointment with a vet to discuss treatment options.

Diet

Some animals may require extra calories to keep warm, however other animals be less active and may require less food. If you are worried that your animal may be losing or gaining weight, bring them in for a free nurse weight clinic where we will be happy to advise on diet.

Advice for dog owners

- Try to walk dogs during daylight if possible, but if you have to walk your dog in the dark keep your dog on a lead and pay attention to visibility. Wear reflective clothing, carry a torch and get your dog a reflective lead and collar.
- If your dog gets wet, make sure that you dry them as soon as you get home
- Consider getting a winter coat for short-coated or thin dogs. Breeds such as Greyhounds, Chihuahuas and Dobermans can struggle to keep warm.
- Ice, salt and grit can damage your dog's feet so some dogs will benefit from wearing doggy boots. Wash your dog's feet after a walk on salted pavements.
- Trim the fur around your dog's feet to prevent ice-balls forming. Dogs with long hair on the belly may also get snow balls forming which can be uncomfortable.
- Stay away from frozen ponds and lakes. Keep your dog on a lead near frozen water and if your animal falls in, don't risk your own safety.

Advice for cat owners

- Most cats will prefer to stay indoors during the winter, but if your cat insists on going outdoors make sure that they have a warm place to go at all times. If it becomes extremely cold, keep them indoors to prevent the risk of hypothermia and frostbite.
- Ideally, keep your cat indoors at night to reduce the risk of road traffic accidents in the dark.
- Cats like to take a nap on warm places - this includes on car engines! They can be seriously injured or killed when the engine is started up. Knock on the bonnet of your car a few minutes before starting the engine.
- If it snows, check that cat flaps aren't blocked and make sure there is a litter tray inside that your cat can use.
- Sometimes cats may wander or become trapped when looking for shelter. Make sure your cat is microchipped in case it is brought in. If in any doubt, keep your cat inside.

Advice for small animal owners

- Small pets, such as rabbits and guinea pigs are very susceptible to cold weather. As it gets colder, move them indoors or move the hutch into a unused garage. If this isn't possible, cover the hutch with a blanket and make sure wind, rain or snow can't blow in.
- Ensure the hutch is dry, well ventilated and has warm bedding. Heat pads can also be placed under bedding.
- Check water bottles regularly as the metal ball bearing inside the spout freezes easily.
- Change the bedding at least twice a week to prevent it becoming damp and to reduce lung irritation from ammonia build up.
- Allow access to a run during the day so that your pets can still exercise.
- Foxes and badgers become hungrier and bolder in the winter. Make sure that your hutch can withstand attacks from a predator.



Don't forget food and water for the garden birds!



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