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Get Your Pet Ready for Winter Fun

With colder temperatures just around the corner and snow in the forecast, we want to make sure our pets are ready for the colder temperatures. Pets can survive Minnesota winters outdoors, but we need to provide them a few basic necessities. Senior pets may require a little more help as the temperature lowers.

Water

All pets that live outdoors in the winter need consistent daily access to fresh water. There are many heated pet bowls on the market. These heated water dishes still need to be checked daily in case of power failure. In very cold weather, some of the smaller dishes can still form a film of ice over the top that will need to be removed. Pets should not be expected to break through ice to drink on their own. Pets cannot receive enough moisture to survive on snow, which means fresh water is a must.

Food

Pets need to be fed daily at minimum during cold temperatures. During winter it may be difficult to tell if a pet is losing weight, is too thin or is too fat due to their thick winter coat. At least weekly, take your fingers and feel through your pet's winter coat down to their ribs. Prevent pets from becoming obese in the winter by measuring their food.

Shelter

Outdoor pets should have access to shelter that is away from wind and rain. This could be a dog house, garage or barn. Do not leave your pet tied up without access to shelter. Many pets, especially senior pets, would benefit from a heated pet bed. There are many safe products on the market. Pets have more difficulty adjusting to temperatures, if they are brought in the warm house and then put outside again. If your pet is an outdoor only pet, staying in a consistent temperature is best and only bring them inside if the pet is ill or if you plan on keeping them inside.

Senior Pets

Many senior pets need more help as temperatures become lower. Glucosamine supplements, prescribed by your veterinarian, can help arthritis pain which cold and inactivity can make worse. Some pets may also need a prescription pain medication to treat arthritis. In addition, ice and slick surfaces can be dangerous to older pets. Use a pet safe ice melter. Dog boots or mats over the area can also help to give your pet more grip. Help your pet up and down stairs, sometimes a towel is needed to support their hind end. Make sure the pet exercise regularly. Always consult with your veterinarian for any medications, exercise or feeding directions.

Disclaimer: This written content is meant to be educational and is not medical advice. Always consult a veterinarian about medical advice for your pet.