

Current Headlines in Evergreen

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Animal Behaviorist

Brrr...it's getting cold outside!

By Maureen Strenfel
*Animal Behaviorist,
Humane Society Silicon Valley*

Even though your pet sports a fur coat, that doesn't mean it is naturally protected from the rigors winter. The wind, rain, and cold reduce an animal's resistance and it can become dangerously chilled if its fur is wet, because a wet coat can't regulate body temperature.

With all the colder, rainy weather, the shelter animals need lots of blankets, towels and soft beds to keep warm. Donations can be dropped off at HSSV, located at 2530 Lafayette Street in Santa Clara.

Here are a few guidelines to help you protect your companion animals when the mercury dips:

1. Bring your animals indoors. Pets not only belong indoors as members of the family, but also are safer, warmer and happier inside. Outdoors, felines in particular, can freeze, become lost or be stolen, injured or killed. Cats that are allowed to stray are exposed to infectious diseases, including rabies, from other cats, dogs and wildlife.
2. During the winter, outdoor cats sometimes sleep under the hoods of cars. When the motor is started, the cat can be injured or killed by the fan belt. If there are outdoor cats in your area, bang loudly on the car hood before starting the engine to give the cat a chance to escape.
3. If you take your pooch to the snow country, never let your dog off the leash on snow or ice, especially during a snowstorm. Dogs can lose their scent and easily become lost. More dogs are lost during the winter than any other season, so make sure your dog always wears ID tags and is microchipped. HSSV offers affordable microchips for \$40.
4. Thoroughly wipe off your dog's legs and stomach when it comes in out of the sleet, snow or ice. Your dog can ingest salt, antifreeze or other potentially dangerous chemicals while licking his paws. Its paw pads may also bleed from snow or encrusted ice.
5. Never shave your dog down to the skin in winter, as a longer coat will provide more warmth. When you bathe your dog in the colder months, be sure to completely dry them before taking them out for a walk. Own a shorthaired breed? Consider getting them a coat or sweater with a high collar or turtleneck with coverage from the base of the tail to the belly. For many dogs, this is regulation winter wear.
6. Never leave your dog or cat alone in a car during cold weather. A car can act as a refrigerator in the winter, holding in the cold and causing the animal to freeze to death.
7. Puppies do not tolerate the cold as well as adult dogs, and may be difficult to housebreak during the winter. If your puppy appears to be sensitive to the weather, you may opt to paper-train him inside. If you have a dog that is sensitive to the cold due to age, illness or breed type, take them outdoors only to relieve themselves.

8. Does your dog spend a lot of time engaged in outdoor activities? Increase his/her supply of food, particularly protein, to keep them—and their fur—in tip-top shape.
9. Like coolant, antifreeze is a lethal poison for dogs and cats. Be sure to thoroughly clean up any spills from your vehicle, and consider using products that contain propylene glycol rather than ethylene glycol.
10. Make sure your companion animal has a warm place to sleep, off the floor and away from all drafts. A cozy dog or cat bed with a warm blanket or pillow is perfect.

About Humane Society Silicon Valley

Humane Society Silicon Valley (HSSV) is an independent, non-profit agency offering quality adoptions, medical care and education programs to enhance the human-animal bond. Established in 1929, HSSV has served Silicon Valley for 75 years and grown into one of the largest animal shelters on the West Coast, caring for nearly 20,000 animals in fiscal year 2004-2005. More information about HSSV can be found at our website at www.hssv.org.