



**COLD, HARD FACTS:  
COMING DEEP FREEZE THREATENS ANIMALS**

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MADISON – Bitter cold weather’s not just uncomfortable for pets and livestock – it’s a danger and owners need to protect their animals, says Wisconsin’s humane officer.

“Extreme cold weather poses all sorts of threats. Animals can suffer from hypothermia, frostbite and other cold weather injuries, and harsh conditions can weaken their immune systems, leaving them vulnerable to illness. You need to think about extra nutrition, access to water, plenty of good bedding, and proper shelter for both pets and livestock,” says Dr. Yvonne Bellay of the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection.

She offers these tips for pet owners:

- **Food** Outdoor pets need more food, of good quality, in cold weather to produce body heat.
- **Shelter** Outdoor animals need a dry house that’s large enough for them to stand, sit, turn around and lie down comfortably, but not so large that its normal body heat is lost. Line the bottom with dry, nonabsorbent material that won’t get wet, matted, and frozen. Marsh hay works well; leaves and fabric do not.
- **Water** Don’t make your outdoor pets rely on ice or snow for water, because the animal has to expend too much body heat melting them. Use an inexpensive heater that sits right in the water bowl to prevent freezing. If you can’t do that, fill the bowl with fresh, tepid water at least twice a day.
- **Walking** Keep your dog leashed. Snow and ice can make it difficult for dogs to follow a scent, so they may lose their way and be wandering in bitter cold. Protect their paws from sharp ice and salt, either with booties or by cleaning their paws thoroughly when they come inside. Short-haired dogs need sweaters outdoors in extreme cold weather.
- **Grooming** Wet, dirty, matted coats cannot insulate against the cold, so be sure your animals are well-groomed, but not shaved. After bathing an animal, dry it thoroughly before letting it outdoors.
- **Cars** Bang on the hood before starting the car on cold days to startle any sleeping animals that may have sought shelter there. And remember, don’t leave your pet alone in a vehicle. It may freeze to death.
- **Sleeping** Even indoor animals needs a warm place to sleep, off the floor and out of drafts. This is especially true for old or ill animals.

For livestock owners, Bellay advises:

- **Shelter** Generally, a 20-mph wind is about equal to a 30-degree drop in temperature. Make sure animals have a place to get out of the wind, even if it is just a windbreak or a three-sided shelter, and that other buildings don’t deflect wind and snow into the shelter.
- **Food** Livestock kept outdoors will need more food than usual — and good quality food. As a general rule, nutrient requirements increase about 1 percent for every degree that the temperature falls below 20 degrees F. Horses’ nutrition requirements increase below 45 degrees F.
- **Water** Provide access to fresh water – not frozen streams or snow – daily. Stock tank heaters and frost-proof waterers will ensure that livestock get enough to drink.
- **Bedding** Keep plenty of dry bedding to insulate udders and legs from frostbite.
- **Moisture** Long hair or fleece insulates only when it is dry. Wet or muddy hair or fleece loses insulating ability and actually cools the animal as it dries.
- **Transportation** When hauling animals, especially calves and swine, cover openings in the vehicle box to cut wind chill and keep rain out, but allow some air to pass over the animals for ventilation. Provide a deep bed of dry straw for calves younger than 4 weeks or for any swine. Be especially careful with animals recently brought in from warmer climates that may not be acclimated.

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