

Winter Pet Hazards

Ho Ho the Mistletoe.... Hung Where Pets Can See. Somebody Eats a Leaf. An ER Trip for me!
At last the winter season is here! With all the associated hustle and bustle we may be too busy to notice potential pet hazards that are unique to the winter months and Holiday season.

1. Antifreeze

Antifreeze contains ethylene glycol, which imparts a sweet taste, making it attractive to dogs and cats. If not treated immediately after consumption, dogs and cats will likely die. According to the Pet Poison Helpline, there are three stages of antifreeze poisoning in dogs and cats: 1) Drooling, vomiting and signs of walking "drunk" occur within 30 minutes to 12 hours of ingestion 2) Clinical signs seem to "resolve", despite severe internal injury, within 12-24 hours of ingestion 3) Acute kidney failure and possibly seizures or coma occur between 12-24 hours of ingestion for cats and 36-72 hours of ingestion for dogs. Take your pet to the veterinarian ASAP if you have the slightest suspicion of ingestion!

2. Warm Cars

Thank goodness for remote starters in the winter! Unfortunately, pets and wildlife often try to keep warm by snuggling up to the exhaust of an idling car or under it's hood. Pets may be inadvertently run over or become entangled in engine parts by doing so. Avoid tragedy by always checking under the hood and wheels before driving a car that has been idling.

3. Deicer/ Salts

Ice-melting salts not only irritate and chap your pet's paws, they can also poison your pet if consumed in sufficient quantities. When salting your own driveway and sidewalks, look for pet-safe ice-melting products. Additionally, wash your pet's feet every time they come in from outside. Better yet, consider buying him or her some cute winter booties.

4. Medical Conditions and the Cold

Arthritic and elderly pets have more difficulty walking on snow and ice and are more prone to slipping and falling. Pets with diabetes, heart disease, kidney disease, or hormonal imbalances such as Cushing's disease, may have a harder time regulating their body temperature. It is best to know your pet's limitations and consult your veterinarian for some great ways to keep your pet happy and entertained indoors.

5. Power Loss

Be prepared! Cold weather brings the risk of severe winter weather, blizzards and power outages. Prepare a disaster/emergency kit and include your pet in your plans. Have enough food, water and medicine (including any prescription medications as well as heartworm and flea/tick preventives) on hand to last 5 days.

6. Sheltering Outside Animals

We do not recommend keeping any pet outside in cold weather for long periods of time. However, we are often asked how you can help feral cat colonies. Large plastic bins with

a hole cut in one side are a way to provide a shelter for these animals. Line the bin with old towels, blankets, or straw. If the materials inside become soiled or wet, change them if you are able. You can make sure these homeless cats have unlimited access to fresh, non-frozen water by changing the water frequently or using a pet-safe, heated water bowl. Heated pet mats, although great in theory, should be used with caution as they may be capable of causing thermal burns.

7. Holiday Hazards

- Christmas Trees: Anchor your tree to prevent it from toppling over. Do not allow your pet to drink from stagnant tree water.
- Mistletoe and Holly: artificial plants this holiday season are a safer option.
- Tinsel: Sparkly and attractive to kitties, ingestion can lead to an obstruction in the small intestine requiring surgical correction. Strings of thrown confetti carry the same risk.
- Candles: Hot wax can cause serious burns.
- Electric cords/Light Strands: May deliver a lethal electric shock if chewed.
- Batteries: If punctured may cause burns to the mouth and esophagus.
- Food and Alcohol: chocolate, xylitol, fatty foods, grapes, raisins, onions, and alcohol all spell trouble for pets. Toxic amounts vary for each food item and each pet. Never assume if only a small amount was consumed your pet will probably be ok. For some pets, even a single raisin is one too many.

8. New Year's Hazards

As you count down to the New Year, please keep in mind this can be an overwhelming and stressful night for pets. Make sure to provide your pet with a safe and quiet area to escape from fireworks, noise poppers, and visiting guests. Discuss options for easing your pet's anxiety with your veterinarian.