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Snow or sun in the forecast? Protect your companion animal from the elements year-round

HOT WEATHER TIPS

- Never leave your pet alone in a vehicle. Even with the windows open, a parked car, truck or van can quickly become a furnace on a hot day—and overheating (heat prostration) can kill an animal. Parking in the shade offers little protection, as the sun shifts during the day. Always carry a gallon of cold water for your pet.
- Don't force your animal to exercise after a meal in hot, humid weather. Exercise her in the early morning or in the evening, and keep walks to a minimum.
- Never leave your dog standing on hot asphalt. His body can heat up quickly and his sensitive paw pads can burn.
- Do not take an animal to the beach unless you can provide a shaded spot and plenty of fresh water for him to drink. Rinse him off after he has been in salt water.
- It's smart to provide plenty of shade and a well-constructed doghouse for animals staying outside. Bring your dog inside during the hottest part of the day, and make sure she has plenty of cool water. Keep cats indoors.
- Be extra sensitive to old and overweight animals in hot weather. Brachycephalic or snub-nosed dogs such as bulldogs, pugs, Boston terriers, Lhasa apsos and shih tzus, as well as those with heart or lung diseases, should be kept cool in air-conditioned rooms as much as possible.
- Avoid walking your dog in areas that you suspect have been sprayed with insecticides or other chemicals. Be alert for coolant or other automotive fluid leaking from your vehicle. Animals are attracted to the sweet taste, and ingesting just a small amount can be fatal. Call your veterinarian or the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center at 1-888-4ANI-HELP if you suspect that your animal has been poisoned.
- Keep your animal well-groomed to stave off summer skin problems. Shaving a heavy-coated dog's hair to a one-inch length helps prevent overheating. Don't shave the hair down to the skin, though, or you will rob him of protection from the sun. Cats should be brushed often.
- Bring your companion animal to the veterinarian for a spring or early summer check-up—including a test for heartworm, if your dog isn't on year-round preventive medication. Ask your doctor to recommend a safe pest-control program to combat fleas and ticks.
- To prevent escape and/or accidental falls, make sure all windows in your home are properly screened.
- Own a short-haired breed? Consider getting him a coat or sweater with a high collar or turtleneck with coverage from the base of the tail to underneath the belly. For many dogs, this is regulation winter wear.
- Never leave your pet 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.
- If your dog is sensitive to the cold due to age, illness or breed type, take him outdoors only to relieve himself.
- Puppies do not tolerate the cold as well as adult dogs, and may be difficult to house-break during the winter. If your puppy appears to be sensitive to the weather, you may opt to paper-train him inside.
- Does your dog spend a lot of time engaged in outdoor activities? Increase his supply of food, particularly protein, to keep him—and his fur—in tip-top shape.
- Like coolant, antifreeze is a lethal poison for dogs and cats. Thoroughly clean up any spills from your vehicle, and consider using products that contain less toxic propylene glycol rather than ethylene glycol.
- Never shave your dog down to the skin in winter, as a longer coat will provide more warmth. When you bathe your dog, be sure to completely dry him before taking him out for a walk.
- 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.
- Thoroughly wipe off your dog's legs and stomach when he comes in out of the sleet, snow or ice. He can ingest salt, antifreeze or other chemicals while licking his paws, and his paw pads may bleed from encrusted snow or encrusted ice.

COLD WEATHER TIPS

- Keep your cat inside. Outdoors, felines can freeze, become lost or be stolen, injured or killed. Cats who are allowed to stray are exposed to infectious diseases, including rabies, from other cats, dogs and wildlife.
- 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.
- Never let your dog off leash on snow or ice, especially during a snowstorm. Dogs can lose their scent and become lost. More companion canines are lost during the winter than during any other season, so make sure yours always wears ID tags.
- Thoroughly wipe off your dog's legs and stomach when he comes in out of the sleet, snow or ice. He can ingest salt, antifreeze or other chemicals while licking his paws, and his paw pads may bleed from encrusted snow or encrusted ice.