

## **Caring for your dog in the cold weather and through the holiday season.**

Many people wonder about the proper care for their favorite furry friends especially where temperatures plummet below freezing. Pay special attention to breeds that do not produce an undercoat. It is essential that you check their body temperature and provide proper attire for them when going outdoors in the freezing cold. If your dog spends a lot of time outdoors, make sure you feed him a little extra. Extra calories are essential to keep their body temperature running at optimum levels. If you are out walking after the roads and sidewalks have been salted; remember to protect their pads. Most people do not use Pet Safe snow melt. Some dog's paws are so sensitive that they can't walk in areas where rock salt has been spread. Buy your dog a pair of Muttluk's (booties) or at the very least wash and dry his paws thoroughly when you get home. When taking your dog for a walk, be careful he doesn't lick a puddle of antifreeze on the roadway or in a parking area. Dogs generally like the smell and taste of antifreeze; it can be lethal. Towel or blow-dry your dog if he gets wet from a cold rain or snow. Make sure he has a dry blanket to lie on that is not in a drafty area. Besides protecting his paws, don't forget about his ears and tail they are subject to frostbite. Dogs that are left in yards in the extreme heat or cold even for short periods should be given adequate shelter with unlimited fresh water. Snow and ice is not a substitute for water.

Along with the plummeting temperatures are holiday festivities and decorations. Be mindful of foods that will make your dog sick like cookies, chocolates, candy (sugar) and alcoholic beverages. Christmas trees can be very inviting to a dog in many ways. Avoid decorations that are made from food such as strung popcorn or edible ornaments. Do not leave wiring from tree lights or tinsel hanging that might be tempting for a dog to play with. Glass ornaments are dangerous if they fall to the floor and shatter; stepping on or eating pieces of glass can be fatal. Keep your dogs water bowl full so he doesn't drink the tree water as an alternative.

Visitors provide an opportunity for your dog to bolt out the front the door. Train your dog to sit politely when the dog bell rings; there are many good trainers in the area that can help you with this. At the very least, consider a buckle collar with ID tags or micro chipping. Give your dog a safe comfortable place to rest along with a good chew toy, like a stuff Kong; visitors and holiday cheer can be stressful. Keep feeding and exercise on a regular schedule.