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Winter Freeze

Lifesaving Tips for Outdoor Animals

Reminder to Pet Owners: Safe Outdoor Dogs Act and Protecting Pets During the Freeze

HOUSTON (December 20, 2022)—Houston SPCA has an urgent message for pet owners to pay special attention to their outdoor pets as freezing temperatures are expected in the coming days. A pet's age, breed or health may impact how they tolerate inclement weather. It is strongly recommended that all companion animals be brought indoors during the freeze. If a pet is living outdoors during extreme weather, the [Safe Outdoor Dogs Act](#) requires pet owners to provide access to drinking water and protection from extreme temperatures with adequate shelter.

Houston SPCA urges pet owners to reach out on how best to care for their outdoor pet if they have questions. "Do not disregard or abandon your pet, especially during this brutal freeze, as it could have dire consequences," said Adam Reynolds, Chief of Animal Cruelty Investigations. The community is encouraged to call 713-869-7722 (SPCA) if they see an animal in immediate distress, or to fill out a cruelty report at www.houstonspca.org.

The Houston SPCA offers a reminder to pet owners about the Safe Outdoor Dogs Act, and offers some recommendations to help keep outdoor animals safe:

Provide MORE: Food, Water and Shelter: Outdoor pets need to consume 25 to 50 percent more calories than usual because the cold weather tends to deplete their energy. Make sure to provide fresh water for your pet and use plastic food and water bowls as your pet's tongue can stick to metal or the water can freeze. Outdoor pets should have a shelter or dog house that will protect them from the wind and is elevated. Add in blankets, towels or hay to help keep your pet warm and dry.

Exercise Care with Cats, Canines and Cars: In the winter, the interior of an idle car can act as a refrigerator, so never leave pets in a car. Keep your cats indoors during cold weather as they may sleep under the hoods of cars to stay warm. *Give an outdoor cat a chance to escape by banging loudly on the car hood before starting your car.*

Avoid Antifreeze and Rodenticide Poisoning: When taking care of your car's winter needs, be sure to use 'pet safe' antifreeze since some cats and dogs are attracted to the sweet smell and taste of antifreeze, which is lethal to your pets. Also keep rat and mouse poisons out of reach, as they can cause fatal bleeding or organ failure in your pet.

Equine & Farm Animals: Be sure horses have access to a barn or a three-sided structure with a roof so they can escape the wind and cold. While not all horses will need to be blanketed, blankets will help horses keep warm and dry, especially in the rain or freezing temperatures. Frequently check water troughs and buckets to ensure the water is not frozen. Provide access to extra grain and hay if no grazing is available. Feed your horse unlimited forage during extreme cold to help them increase and regulate their body temperatures.

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