

Keeping Your Dog Safe and Warm

Dogs with Wings Assistance Dog Society | January 2014

Pet owners often consider their dogs beloved parts of the family. Keeping them happy, safe, and comfortable is a top priority all year round. However, dogs are especially vulnerable during inclement weather. When the chill hits, there are several ways to help keep your pet safe and warm through the frigid winter days and nights. The best way, of course, being to raise your dog in your home, but for those who use their yards actively, here are some pointers.

Shelter

It is vital, especially in areas hit with snow and freezing temperatures, that your dog has proper shelter if being housed outside. The size of your dog's house should complement its size. An ideal house is small and cozy enough that your pet can easily warm it with its own body heat. However, the space should be large enough that your dog can move around and lie down comfortably. Make sure the doghouse you choose has a slanted or rounded roof to allow snow to slide off rather than accumulate.

Bedding

When it comes to bedding for your pup, there are many options. Traditional pet beds work well and may be the most obvious choice. You can also make use of old rugs or blankets. Recycle your worn sweaters, and use them as a soothing, warm bed. Whatever bedding you opt for, place it in the dog's sleeping or relaxing area, whether it be inside or outside. If outside, this will create a barrier between your pet and the cold ground.

Food and Water

As with any time of year, a fresh supply of food and water is essential to your dog's healthy body functioning including heat regulation.

Cold Walking

Walking dogs in the cold is a necessary reality for many of us. If you sense your dog is cold or he is holding up a paw indicating ice on his paws, adjust accordingly. Walk only in well shoveled areas, or even purchase winter jackets or paw covers. Take advantage of the warmest part of the day to get your dog its exercise.

Bring Them In

The best thing you can do for your dog when the temperature drops is bring it inside. If your pet is normally an outdoor dweller, you can still let it in without giving it the run of the house. During exceptionally cold nights and long periods of cold weather, use baby gates to partition off a mudroom or the kitchen. With your pet inside, it is sure to have a warm and comfortable night, and you can rest easy knowing that it is safe.

Proper shelter, water supply, bedding and heat sources all contribute to the health and happiness of your pet during cold snaps. As the chill of winter takes hold, take these easy measures to keep your pets safe and warm. Not only will you keep your beloved pet happy, but you will have peace of mind as well.

About Dogs with Wings:

Dogs with Wings is a leader in the international community of assistance dog training schools. The organization exists to serve people with disabilities. They work collaboratively, and in partnership with other organizations that provide assistance dogs to people with disabilities.

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