



Cold Weather Safety Tips

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It's nearly February and Jack Frost is on his way to Florida for some much needed R & R. Not to worry though, his cousin Jack *Frostbite* has arrived to take over.

As we hunker down and do our best to avoid the arctic temperatures currently plaguing the northeast our dogs and cats still need to go outside to do their business, run and play. They often seem happy despite the frigid air; however, just because they wear fur coats we must pay close attention to them.

Pets are extremely susceptible to cold injuries like Frost Nip, Frostbite and Hypothermia. These can be serious if not quickly identified or treated properly. This article will focus on Frostbite, the most commonly occurring cold weather injury reported by pet owners.

Definition

Frostbite occurs most commonly in the extremities like the ears, paws, scrotum and tail as a response to blood vessels in these areas constricting from the cold and re-routing blood back to the body to keep vital organs warm. Since there are fewer blood vessels in these areas they are most susceptible to cold-related injuries.

Causes

Extreme or prolonged exposures to low ambient temperatures. This is also dramatically worsened by windchill factors so you must pay attention to both variables.

Signs

- Skin can become swollen, red and painful to the touch.
- Skin can be hard and pale. In later stages the pet may lose skin or hair in the affected area.
- Lethargy
- Gums either pale or bluish in color
- Slow, shallow breathing
- Shivering

Actions

- Remove pet from cold immediately
- DO NOT rub injured area. Ice crystals form in frozen body parts and have sharp edges so rubbing frozen skin can cause damage.
- Contact Veterinarian for re-warming instructions. Cooling a pet down from the heat is much easier than re-warming. You have to be careful not to use water that's hot or even too warm because skin is extremely sensitive in this state and susceptible to burns and infection in this condition.
- Serious cases require immediate attention by veterinarian or emergency animal hospital to prevent further pain, ward off infection and to assess possible tissue damage. Again, seek professional medical instructions at once.

The most important thing you can do in this or any emergency situation with your pet is to take a deep breath before you react. If you are not calm you will be likely to upset your pet, making any further treatment difficult and potentially hazardous for both of you.

Would you know what to do in other emergency situations to rescue your pet? Do you know how to administer CPR or what to do if your pet is choking or has ingested a poisonous substance?

Contact us for our monthly schedule of Pet Tech classes in across eastern Massachusetts. You will learn so many important skills and leave with the confidence you'll need to know what to do to save your pet's life.

Call us at 781-727-1888 or visit www.pettechboston.com



Rob Nager is a lifelong resident of Boston and the founder of **DECADENT DOG**[®], a full service pet care company. He was named 2008 Pet Sitter of the Year[®] by Pet Sitters International and is a Certified Pet Tech[®] Instructor in Pet CPR, First Aid & Care.

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