

While you're readying your family for winter, don't overlook the family pet. He needs special attention before cold weather hits and throughout the winter months, too.

### Wintertime rations

Your pet's diet becomes extremely important in winter. Cold weather usually makes extra demands on his system, so balanced meals every day are essential.

If your pet lives outdoors, he's also likely to need more food in winter. Be sure your pet receives those extra rations in two or three meals a day. He can't eat enough at one feeding to get all the calories he needs to keep warm. While you're at it, make sure your pet gets all the water (at room temperature) he can drink at least three times every day. Full watering pans turn into useless ice chunks in no time during cold weather.

Indoor dogs probably won't need their wintertime diets adjusted. Though they may be exercising less than usual, indoor canines will burn up any spare calories keeping warm when they do go outdoors. But your veterinarian can give you some guidelines if your dog puts on a pound or two.

Indoor cats get their exercise regardless of the weather, so you probably won't need to reduce their rations. If yours is an outdoor cat, the cold weather may stimulate his appetite and he may fatten up a bit. But that plumpness usually disappears with the first signs of spring.

### Cold-weather grooming

Shedding is one of the nuisances that goes along with owning a dog or cat. Normally, your pet sheds his coat in spring, getting the jump on warm weather. But indoor pets who live in heated surroundings sometimes shed throughout the year, or they may reverse nature's plan and start shedding in winter. In fact, every time the family pet curls up near a radiator or other heating outlet, he's courting problems. Too much heat not only leads to shed-

# HOW TO HELP YOUR PET WEATHER WINTER

ding, but may dry out your pet's coat and cause itching as well.

Frequent brisk walks help stimulate circulation and tone up your pet's skin. That results in freeing dead hair and promoting growth of a new coat. After walking your pet, brush him vigorously to remove dead hair before it winds up on your furniture and carpet. Brushing also stimulates skin oils that help keep your pet's coat in good shape. You may want to add a little vegetable oil or some fat drippings to your pet's food once a day in winter. (Use only a very small amount of oil for cats.)

Go easy on soap and water baths. They tend to dry out your pet's skin and coat. Daily brushing and a brisk towel rubdown will keep most pets clean. If a bath is necessary, try a commercial dry bath powder.

### Snow and ice trouble

Dogs especially love to romp in the snow. But snow can contain hidden hazards, particularly for city dogs, because it frequently becomes mixed with salt and chemical "melters." These can poison a dog if they're eaten. After an outing, be sure to wash your pet's feet thoroughly so he won't ingest the chemicals when he licks himself.

Crystals of these "melters," along with icy lumps of snow, also can become lodged between the pads in your pet's feet and cause irritation. If you neatly clip the hair from between your pet's toes, ice and snow won't have anything to cling to. Your pet won't track the house as much, either.

Another wintertime threat is poisonous antifreeze. Be sure your pet can't get at it.

### Traumatic switches

With food, water, and adequate shelter, most dogs and cats can thrive outdoors in winter. But you're asking for trouble if you subject your pet to radical temperature changes. Switching from heated to unheated quarters isn't only mighty uncomfortable for your pet, but also can lower his resistance and lead to colds, bronchial infections, and other serious illnesses. Indoor pets should never be left outdoors in winter for long periods of time, and no pet should be kept indoors at night and outdoors during the day (or vice versa). Even when exercising your indoor pet on a cold day, keep the walk brisk and brief.

**NOTE:** Those dogs and cats sporting sweaters and coats during severe weather aren't "sissies." They're usually healthy, happy animals with smart owners who know that "wraps" help protect their pets by equalizing indoor and outdoor temperatures. Some pet shops even sell boots to protect dogs' feet.

Among common winter maladies for pets are tracheobronchitis, canine distemper, and feline infectious enteritis. If you spot suspicious symptoms—watery eyes and nose, coughing, loss of appetite, diarrhea, or vomiting—get your veterinarian's help promptly.

Vaccinations should be kept up to date in winter, too. Outdoor pets are especially vulnerable to infections because cold weather puts extra stress on their systems. A new three-in-one shot is now available for felines. It combines protection against enteritis along with rhinotracheitis and calicivirus (which cause about 80 percent of all feline respiratory infections).

Worms of all kinds are a chronic problem for pets regardless of the season. Have your veterinarian check a sample of your pet's stool once a year, more often if you suspect trouble. Puppies and kittens should be checked for worms every three to six months. Locating an outdoor dog's house in a clean area of the yard helps avoid worms. ■