

# COLD CAN BE HARMFUL TO ANIMALS... ...USE LOTS OF STRAW TO INSULATE FOR OUTDOOR DOGS

BY JODI GILlich, LEADER-POST

"As the temperature slips below -20 C, people should be on the lookout for animals in distress," says the Regina Humane Society. Issuing its first "cold-weather alert" of the season, the Regina Humane Society says that even the hardiest animals need to be constantly monitored in such severe temperatures.



"People expect that since an animal is wearing its natural fur coat that they are able to keep warm and that's totally untrue," says Gail MacMillan, the society's community liaison. "If we feel the cold and we're wearing a parka, mitts and a touque, then you can rest assured that your animal is feeling the cold too."

If pets are allowed outdoors, owners should consider the temperature as a major factor in keeping their animals healthy and safe.

Dr. Karen Harasen, a veterinarian at the Animal Clinic of Regina, says that when animals are left out in the cold, they first experience problems with their extremities ~ their ears and their feet.

Cats, especially, are prone to having their ears freeze in a matter of minutes. Another issue is cats crawling up into parked vehicle engines because they are looking for warmth, Harasen says. When people go to start their vehicles, the cats can be hit by the fan belt and be hurt.

If people live around farm cats or in an area with stray cats, Harasen suggests pounding on the vehicle or lifting the hood to ensure the cat gets out of the engine before they start the car. MacMillan says that at this time of year cats should really not be outdoors at all.

Dogs are particularly affected by frostbite on their feet. "Anyone who's taken their dog out knows that they'll start dancing pretty quickly with their feet," says Harasen. She says that dogs under 40 pounds ~ no matter how thick their coat is ~ should not be outdoors for long. Dogs that are left outside should have a double hair coat like a Malamute or Husky.

Outdoor dogs need proper shelter to shield them against the wind and some dry bedding ~ as simple as straw ~ to insulate them from the cold that comes from the ground, as well as a heat source, like a light bulb.

Harasen has seen situations where animals have been frozen to pavement or ice. "I can only assume it happens when it's damp out and they're cuddled up somewhere and they've got a bit of melting below them and the temperature drops and they're frozen to a board or something," she says.

MacMillan says that although it's common sense "that you don't go to work in the morning and leave your dog out," the Regina Humane Society has seized several animals this week that were left outdoors without proper shelter.

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