



Boredom Busters Pet Care Services

Winter Warmers: Hints & Tips

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Winter advice for pet owners

Snow balls can form on long haired dogs. Even shorter haired breeds can gather these on their feet, and once they have formed they need to be left to melt (hairdryers can help if your dog will tolerate it). They are very painful for your dog to walk on, so if you spot them, take the dog home for a break. Vaseline between the toes, and keeping long fur trimmed can help. Leave some fur on, as is will help to protect their pads from frozen ground.



If you have a dog whose fur collects snow balls, we can't remove these, time has to melt them so please leave plenty of towels and your heating on to keep your dog warm once we've gone. We have a lot more small dogs this year, so we might change to a street walk to keep them out of the deepest snow, or you could consider daycare for the worst days so they can defrost at my house. Young, elderly, ill or infirm dogs may need a coat when out of doors this winter. Wind can be very chilling.

Older pets should have a soft bed with raised sides to protect them from draughts. Dogs can be very stoical so get down on the floor and see how their bed feels. Arthritic pets may need slower, shorter walks. Not sure if your dog is sore? Do they lick the same spot a lot, are they slow to get out of bed, or stiff and perhaps a little grumpy if disturbed? Some limps are very subtle and may not be noticed. A trip to the vet could make your pet more comfortable.

It can be just as dangerous to leave a dog in a **cold car** as a hot one – make sure your dog is warm enough if you have to leave them for a short while, or that they have a coat or a blanket if at the back of a large vehicle – heating can take some time to warm up the back.



Ice and snow usually lead to **gritting** lorries. The salt and other materials can irritate your dogs feet, so you may need to give them a wash when returning from a walk; try not to let your dogs lick their feet in case they ingest something that could make them ill.

Dogs, but in particular cats, have a great liking for **anti-freeze** due to its sweet taste. Keep it well away from your pets because it can be fatal, and don't let them drink from puddles where cars may have been parked.

Rabbits and guinea pigs are often left outside in the winter. Rabbits can deal with this as long as they are not in a draught or getting damp. For guinea pigs it's pure misery! Bring your guinea pigs into a shed or unused garage, and give them, and rabbits, thick newspaper under the bedding to help insulate. Make sure they have plenty of extra bedding, changed more frequently as if it gets wet (either rain or urine), it will freeze. Bubble wrap is your furry friend's Best Friend, then cable tie a plant pot to the inside of the hutch and put the water bottle in there. Once the hutch is insulated it reduces the risk of the bottle freezing, but keep a spare water bottle to hand to swap them over if one freezes. If you can't get bubble wrap, blankets or a duvet can be used, but only if you can ensure they are covered by a 100% waterproof cover, and water can't creep up from the bottom. If they get wet, your bunny will suffer. Don't forget to spend time with your pets, even if it is cold and dark outside.

Chocolate is toxic to dogs, although they may be able to tolerate a small amount of milk chocolate. Call the vet if you suspect they have been in the Quality Streets – cooking chocolate is much worse, so watch out when chocolate cakes are around. **Mistletoe**, and in particular the berries, are highly toxic, so make sure they are hung up carefully and can't be pulled down by the dogs. Watch out for fallen berries too.