

# Winter Safety Tips and Tricks!

Winter, 2016



The cold weather is rolling in and winter is on its way! **Dr. Burmeister** and the staff at **Livingston Animal Hospital** are here to help you keep your pets healthy and happy during the cold months of the year! We've compiled a list of winter tips and tricks to help you and your furry family members stay safe this winter season.

**1. Bundle Up** - When the cold winds blow and the snow starts to fall, it's important to remember that pets get cold too! While their fur does offer some level of protection, domesticated animals are used to the temperature controlled environment in your home, and they like to stay nice and warm just like us! If you take your pet to have their hair trimmed throughout the year, ask your groomer to keep their fur a little longer during the cold months to help them battle the elements. Coats and sweaters are also highly recommended on cold days, especially for smaller pets and those with shorter fur. If your cat goes outside during the winter, make sure they have access to a warm place in case they start to get too cold! Keep walks short and brisk when it's especially cold outside, and remember, if it's too cold for you it's probably too cold for them too!

**2. Protect Those Paws** - Icy walkways are slippery and don't offer any traction for our furry companions, and the salt used to melt the ice can be very irritating to your pets delicate paws! Be sure to check your pup's paws for debris after every walk, and wipe them down with a warm, wet cloth when they come inside to get the salt off their skin. If your dog will tolerate wearing them, winter booties can help to provide traction, and protect their precious toes! Booties are especially helpful for seniors who aren't as sure footed, and pets with long fur on their feet where chunks of snow and salt love to get stuck!

**3. Exercise** - Mental and physical stimulation is important year round, and our pets depend on us to provide them with enriched environments and plenty of things to do! When it's too cold to go outside, indoor exercise is important to keep pets in shape! Stock up on interesting toys, and be sure to invest some one on one play time on a daily basis. Using interactive feeding tools like puzzle bowls and treat balls are a great way to provide some mental stimulation every

day. Winter is also a great time to explore indoor activities like agility and obedience training, to help keep their bodies lean and their minds sharp!

**4. Car Safety** - Just like in the hot months, be sure not to leave your precious pet in the car alone when it's cold outside! It can get very cold inside your car very quickly in the winter, and the insulating nature of the vehicle keeps it cold just like a refrigerator. Unless you're going somewhere where your pet can come inside with you, it's best to leave them at home where they can stay cozy and warm.

**5. Dry Skin Season** - Harsh dry weather can do a number on your pets sensitive skin! Many of us notice that our pets have flakier skin during the winter time, and it's incredibly uncomfortable for our furry friends! Using a humidifier in your home is a great way to keep the indoors moist and comfortable, just make sure you keep it out of your pets reach as the hot steam can cause burns. Pets will also keep their skin more hydrated from the inside out if they have access to plenty of clean water to drink! In the clinic we offer Omega 3 oil supplements to help keep their skin happy and hydrated.

**6. Our Feral Friends** - Feral cats in the winter find warmth anywhere they can get it, and will often sleep in the undercarriages of cars during the night. This is a very dangerous place for them to be when you start your engine in the morning! Please give a loud knock on the hood of your car each morning to alert them to vacate the premises before turning the key! Another thing to note about our feral friends is that they carry fleas year-round. If your cat is going outside during the winter, they are still at risk for getting fleas if they come in contact with feral kitties! Give us a call at the clinic and we can help set you up with the right flea prevention for your outdoor kitty!

**7. Tasty Treats** - With Halloween over and the holidays on the way, many of us have a plethora of candies and chocolates in our home during the winter. While chocolate is the most famous of the toxins for pets, many of the ingredients in candies are not so great for them either! Xylitol, a sugar free sweetener, is a component in many sugar free candies and gums, and is very toxic to dogs especially. If your pet ingests something they shouldn't, please call the clinic immediately!

**8. Winter Plants** - While we love to decorate our homes with green things when it's gloomy outside, it's important to consider which plants are safe for your pets! If you celebrate Christmas and love trimming the tree, consider getting an artificial tree this year. Pine is toxic to cats, and the sharp needles on the tree can cause serious damage if ingested by any pet. Also the chemicals used to treat Christmas trees can be very harmful to our furry friends. Of course it's important that your pet doesn't snack on your artificial tree as well, but it is a far safer alternative. Poinsettia flowers are another common winter plant that is incredibly toxic to cats. The [ASPCA](#) offers lists of toxic plants for

dogs and cats – and yes they are quite lengthy! If you have any doubt whether or not a plant could harm your pet, please don't bring it into your home this winter.

**9. Flu Medication** - When flu season comes, be sure to keep any human medications locked away where your pet cannot reach them! The active ingredients in many human medications are toxic to pets. Acetaminophen (Tylenol) in particular is deadly to cats, even in very small doses, and is a common ingredient in cold and flu medications. If your pet gets into your medicine cabinet, call us right away!

**10. Winter Chemicals** - Automobile antifreeze is one of the biggest pet dangers in the winter time. While it smells sweet and tasty to dogs and cats, it is a toxic liquid that will wreak havoc on their kidneys! Remember to keep antifreeze, and any other toxic fluids (cleaners, oil, etc.) in a safe location and out of the reach of pets and children.

**Please ensure that you and your loves ones stay safe this winter season! Call Livingston Animal Hospital at (905) 309-9600 for more information – any of our team members will be happy to answer your questions or to book an appointment for your pet.**

Feel free to print and/or share this informative flier with friends and family!

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