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Export date: Fri Oct 30 6:11:44 2026 / +0000 GMT

Humane Society shares tips to help keep pets safe this winter]

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As winter weather fluctuates to colder temperatures, the Ontario SPCA and Humane Society reminds pet owners to take extra precautions to keep their animals safe.

?Canadian winter can be harsh and it's up to us to protect our furry friends from the elements,? said Dawn Lyons, manager of the Ontario SPCA Orangeville & District Animal Centre. ?By taking simple step, you can ensure your furry family member is safe and comfortable during the cold winter weather.?

To help pet owners keep their furry family members safe, the SPCA has shared seven tips on winter pet safety.

1. Supervise outdoor time ? some dogs want to be outside, regardless of the weather, but even as little as 30 minutes can be too long for your furry companion in extremely cold temperatures. Even if your dog has a thick coat, keep an eye on them when they are outside playing to watch for early signs that they're cold, such as holding up paws or shivering;

2. Modify outdoor activities ? Limit the length of time spent outside and choose walking routes that loop past your house in case you or your dog need to come in to get warm;

3. Leave pets at home ? Leave your animal at home where they are warm and safe when you're running errands. Vehicles cool down quickly and don't hold in body heat, which can lead to animals suffering from cold stress, hypothermia or frostbite;

4. Watch for cats seeking warmth under vehicle hoods ? knock on the hood of your car or sound the horn before starting the engine. Cats hiding under hoods can be injured or killed by the fan belt;

5. Key paws clean ? use a damp towel to wipe your pet's paws and underside if they've walked along salted sidewalks or roads. Salt and other chemicals used to melt snow and ice on roads and sidewalks can irritate and burn your pet's sensitive paws and can cause illness if ingested;

6. Clean up car spills ? keep an eye out for antifreeze or other automotive leaks in your driveway. Antifreeze has a sweet taste that can be attractive to animals and can be fatal if ingested;

7. Know who to call ? if you have a concern about the welfare of an animal, contact the Provincial Animal Welfare Services team at 1-833-926-4625 or your local police service. If you see an animal in distress and are concerned the animal's life is in danger, call 9-1-1 immediately as this is an emergency.

As a reminder to pet owners, the SPCA wrote, ?acknowledge your animal's unique needs ? cats, puppies, and short-coated dogs are particularly vulnerable in cold temperatures. Some dogs, especially short-coated breeds, puppies and elderly dogs may benefit from a dog sweater or coat as an extra layer of warmth.?

For more information and winter safety tips for pets, visit www.ontariospca.ca.