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Export date: Fri Oct 30 1:04:00 2026 / +0000 GMT

The Ontario SPCA reminds pet parents to take extra care during extreme winter weather

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As bitter cold settles across the province, the Ontario SPCA and Humane Society are reminding pet parents to take precautions to help keep their animals safe. Extreme winter weather poses serious risks, such as frostbite and hypothermia. Animals rely on their owners to protect them from the elements.

?Even a short time in severe cold can be dangerous for animals,? says Dr. Joey Tang, Interim Medical Director, Ontario SPCA and Humane Society. ?By watching for signs of discomfort and making small adjustments to your routine, you can help keep your pets safe this winter.?

Some animals love the snow, but prolonged time outdoors can quickly become hazardous in frigid temperatures. Keep a close eye on your dog when they are outside playing and watch for early signs of cold, such as shivering or lifting their paws. Cats, puppies, seniors, and short-coated animals are especially vulnerable during cold snaps. An insulated sweater or coat can offer much-needed protection for dogs who need an extra layer. But even with winter clothing, animals should only be outside for short periods during extreme cold.

As temperatures drop, frozen lakes and rivers may look inviting to curious pets, but ice can be unpredictable. Keep your pet close, steer clear of the water's edge, and be mindful of thin or refrozen ice that could break without warning.

The Ontario SPCA also urges caution around vehicles. Cars cool rapidly in winter, making them unsafe places for pets. Engines remain warm for a while after being turned off and can attract cats seeking shelter. Before starting your car, knock on the hood or honk the horn to make sure no animals are hiding under the hood.

If you're worried about the safety of an animal, call the Government of Ontario's Provincial Animal Welfare Services team at 1-833-9ANIMAL (1-833-926-4625) or contact your local police. In an emergency, call 911.

For more information on winter pet safety, visit ontariospca.ca