



• SINCE 1923 •

CARING FOR FARM & RANCH PETS IN WINTER

In the farming and ranching world, many of us have outdoor dogs and cats to help manage property. Loyal livestock guardian dogs are valuable friends because they help protect sheep, goats, cattle and other animals from predators. Barnyard cats lend a helpful paw by managing rodents that spread disease, cause property damage and loss of grains in storage.

The majority of these faithful farm, ranch and home pets spend their lives outdoors. It's important that as they help you, you help them by providing adequate shelter, and fresh food and water.

Whether you prefer to keep your pets outside, in the garage, or in the home during the winter months, keeping them safe and healthy is a priority. Here are some ideas and suggestions on how to care for your beloved pets in winter.

THE DANGERS OF WINTER

Pets are just as susceptible to the cold as a human wearing a coat. Moisture can cause a dog's paw to crack and hypothermia can set in. Frostbite can happen on ears and paws. Snow and ice can ball up in between their toes and pads, causing sores and cuts.

While it's true that dogs are naturally equipped to handle colder temperatures, without shelter your pets could get sick or freeze, depending on the breed. If not provided with adequate shelter from wet weather, pets can have a hard time getting their thick winter coats dry. If the winds pick up and temperatures get too low while your animals are still wet, hypothermia and death can occur.



Because the weather can be hard on almost all pets, owners should do the best they can to accommodate and make them comfortable.

KEEP YOUR PETS SHELTERED & WARM

A shelter is a must for outdoor pets to protect them from the elements.

For dogs, we recommend an insulated dog house with a door or some sort of covering for the entrance to block wind chill. A heated pet mat would be a great addition, or you might provide a blanket or a thick pile of straw to insulate from the cold ground. As long as the shelter is not too large, animals will create enough heat to warm their little lodge.

For cats, some have turned unused coolers into outdoor cat homes. There are many DIY tutorials on making a cat house for the feral cat population to give them a safe place to sleep.

Another option might be to create a space with a heater or warm area in your garage, a place to find refuge from the wind.





PROVIDE PLENTY OF WATER & NUTRITION

Did you know that more pets get dehydrated in the winter than in the summer? Pets should always have access to fresh water.

Heated pet bowls are great at keeping water above freezing temperature (it doesn't warm it up, just keeps it above freezing). If not a heated bowl, use a rubber or metal bowl. Rubber bowls are more flexible for breaking out ice and metal bowls are more durable. Give your pet fresh water at least twice a day, preferably morning and night.

Pets typically eat more in the winter months than in the summer months. Animals kept outside during the winter will require more calories to maintain their body condition. Consider increasing the calories during the cold months and monitor the weight loss or gain of your pet. Additional protein is helpful in a working dog's diet as well. Thick hair can sometimes cover poor body condition, so make sure you do hands-on physical checks often on your pets.



Information for this article was provided by Dillon Sorensen, Branch Manager, Ephraim IFA Country Store; Maureen Goodrich, Poultry, Rabbit, Pet & Tack Manager, Logan IFA Country Store; Franny Chamberlain, Pet Dept. Manager, Cedar City IFA Country Store; Jaden Paxton, Pet Dept. Manager, American Fork IFA Country Store; and Martha Page, Animal Health & Pet Category Manager, IFA Feed & Nutrition.

WINTER PET CHECKLIST

GIVE YOUR PETS THE FOLLOWING:



Shelter

Recommendation: Insulated dog house with a door or entrance covering to block wind.



Bedding

Recommendation: A heated pet mat, blanket or thick pile of straw.



Fresh Water

Recommendation: Provide fresh water at least twice per day. Use a heated pet bowl, or a rubber bowl to break ice easier.



Increase Calories

Recommendation: Increase daily calorie and protein intake during the cold months. Regularly check your pet's weight and overall health.



ALL SHAPES & SIZES

Pets come in all shapes and sizes. If you are thinking about adding a dog or cat, take some time and research which breeds fit best in the climate where you live. Many local shelters have a barn cat program and/or a Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) program to manage your feral cat population. Please reach out to your local shelter, rescue group or reputable breeder in finding the right fit for your needs.

If you have more questions, visit your local IFA Country Store. Ultimately, whether you like to keep your pets outdoors or indoors, we want to help you provide the best possible care for all of your animals this winter.

