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CDA Urges Pet Safety during Cold Weather

LAKEWOOD, Colo. – A winter storm is headed into Colorado forcing residents to head indoors to stay warm; the Colorado Department of Agriculture reminds everyone to also protect their pets during cold weather.

“If animals have prolonged exposure to cold conditions, despite having fur, they are still susceptible to hypothermia,” said Dr. Kate Anderson, CDA’s Pet Animal Care Facilities program administrator.

Hypothermia is most likely to occur when an animal is wet. The signs of hypothermia are violent shivering followed by listlessness, apathy, a temperature below 97 degrees and, finally, collapse and coma. If you believe your pet is suffering from hypothermia, consult your veterinarian immediately. Prevention is the best medicine.

A few simple steps can help protect your animals during cold temperatures:

- Keep pets inside. If animals can’t be inside, provide a warm, comfortable place. Face shelter away from wind and provide a flap or door to help keep the animal’s body heat inside.
- Bedding is essential. It insulates the animal from the snow and ice underneath the body and allows the animal to retain heat within the bedding.
- Cats may sleep under the hoods of cars to stay warm. If you have outdoor felines in your neighborhood, check under the hood before starting your car.
- When walking your pet, keep them on leashes; they can’t rely on their sense of smell in the snow and may become lost.

- Wipe off your dog's legs and stomach after being outdoors to remove any ice, salt or chemicals.
- Outdoor pets need more calories to produce body heat so extra food and water must be provided. Devices are now available to keep water dishes from freezing; if one is not available, fill and replace water frequently.

“A good common sense rule is if you need to bundle up from the cold, you also need to take steps to protect your pets,” added Dr. Anderson.

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