

Winter Worries.

With the cold weather now here, the winter months can be a dangerous time for our pets. They can still enjoy this time of year as long as you follow a few precautions. We have put together some winter tips to help keep your pet healthy during this season.

When out and about remember that whilst many dogs love the cold, older, thinner, fine coated breeds, such as lurchers and whippets tend to feel the cold more and find it harder to conserve their body heat; they may benefit from wearing coats. You may want to consider a fluorescent jacket and/or collar especially as the nights are getting darker earlier and many of us are finding we are now walking our dogs in low light. You could also attach a flashing "b'seen" light to their collar to make it easier to see them. Make sure that older, thinner cats are kept in at night as this is when the temperature really drops.

We recommend you ensure your dog has an identification tag on their collar and that all microchip details are up to date for all pets. This increases the chances of being reunited with your pets should they go missing.

We could get a few really cold snaps at times and although it's great to get out and about with your dog, it's best to keep a regular check on your dog's feet. Ice and snow can ball up in the spaces between the toes causing discomfort. Salt and other chemicals used to grit the roads and pavements can irritate your pet's pads, especially if they have any small abrasions, so we would advise that when you get home from a walk, wash your dog's feet with warm water.

With lots of water about make sure that your pet doesn't go swimming at this time of year. The water is much colder at the moment and a lot of ponds/lakes are beginning to freeze over. Hypothermia is a condition that our pets can and do suffer from when faced with an extreme decrease in temperature, which can be caused by swimming in such cold waters. If your dog has a tendency to drink a lot from puddles/ponds etc. when out walking, we would advise you take a water bottle out with you, as drinking very cold water will affect the body's core temperature, potentially leading to hypothermia.

Look out for any limps and difficulties in rising after rest, these are both signs that your pet may have some joint stiffness and is usually made worse by the cold weather. There are treatments available for this so please get in touch with us at the surgery.

Pets such as guinea pigs and rabbits that live outdoors need special consideration at this time of year too. Ensure that their hutches are warm, clean, dry and in a sheltered position. Make sure that they have plenty of bedding and that it is changed daily. Give them fresh food and water daily and check their water bottles to ensure that the water has not frozen.

Fleas.

The flea is an ectoparasite and will feed on the blood of your pet. They can make life for you and your pet very miserable with a vicious cycle of biting and scratching.

[The adult Flea](#) The flea hatches from the pupae into the environment and hops straight onto your pet for a feed. The female will lay eggs within 24-48 hours.

[Flea Eggs](#) Female fleas can lay up to 50 eggs a day after 24 hours of feeding. The eggs will fall off into the environment wherever your pet goes. The eggs hatch in 1-6 days.

[Larvae](#) The eggs hatch into larvae. The larvae will move away from light into dark corners and even under floorboards! The larvae stage lasts 5-11 days.

[Pupae](#) The larvae spin into a sticky cocoon to become pupae. Pupae cannot be killed by any house insecticides. The flea may hatch out in 7-14 days but can lay dormant in the environment for months.

By the time you see fleas on your pet your house is probably already infested.

- ✓ Treat your pet with a product for fleas every month. It can take 3-4 months before immature fleas in the home are depleted, so you may still see fleas on your pet during this time.
 - ✓ Treat your house with a household treatment
 - ✓ Regularly Hoover your home to remove some of the flea eggs, larvae and pupae.
 - ✓ Wash your pets' bedding above 60 degrees.
 - ✓ Continue to allow your pet full access to all areas of the house as normal. That way, new fleas that hatch can jump on your pet and be killed.
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Firework Notice.

As we all know fireworks are still being set off at this time of year right through until Christmas and New Year. Here are a few tips to remember during this period to help your pet remain calm.

1. Build a den for your pet
 2. Take your pet for a long walk and feed a large meal to encourage relaxation at home
 3. Close the curtains and turn on the TV or radio to block out the noise
 4. Consider supplements to help them cope such as zylkene®, nutracalm® or adaptil®.
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