



**Flanary Veterinary Clinic**  
200 Eagle Nest Drive ♦ Paducah, KY 42003 ♦ (270) 898-9738

## **WINTER PET CARE TIPS**

### **Advice for the Colder Winter Months and Holiday Season**

**Heartworm Disease:** This mosquito-transmitted disease can be fatal to your dog. In areas that have a year-round mosquito problem it is recommended that dogs be kept on a heartworm preventative throughout the year. After having your dog tested for heartworms by your veterinarian, ask about heartworm preventatives, available in chewable or pill form and given daily or monthly.

**Housing:** Be sure to provide proper shelter for your pets. If yours is an indoor pet, his bed or crate should be kept in a warm, draft-free area, preferably elevated slightly off the floor. If your pet is kept outdoors, provide a warm insulated pet house or shelter. The house should be elevated enough so that moisture cannot accumulate inside. If possible, provide a “door” (perhaps of canvas) to keep out the winter winds. If your pet is in a pen, you might block the wind and weather with bales of straw and stretch canvas over the top of the pen. If the wind chill or other weather conditions become severe bring your pet inside.

**Frostbite:** Remove ice and snow from your pet’s paws and coat at once. Frostbitten skin may turn reddish, white or gray and it may be scaly or sloughing. If you suspect frostbite, take your pet to a warm place immediately. Thaw frostbitten areas slowly by applying warm, moist towels that are changed frequently. Continue until the affected areas become flushed. Contact your veterinarian as soon as possible; he/she will probably want to evaluate the seriousness of the condition.

**Snow Removal Salt:** Some substances produced to melt ice and snow, have low to moderate toxicity, depending on the ingredients and amount ingested. Read the labels and take necessary precautions. Keep these products stored in tight containers out of your pet’s and children’s reach and be sure to remove salt from your pet’s paws immediately.

**Antifreeze:** Even a very small amount of antifreeze can be fatal. Precautions are necessary with ALL antifreeze products on the market. Read labels and warnings carefully. Thoroughly clean up spills at once. Keep containers closed tightly and store them where pets cannot get to them.

**Napping Cats:** Cats sometimes climb onto vehicle engines for warmth. Before starting your vehicle, knock on the hood and honk the horn. Even if your own cat does not have access to your vehicle, a neighbor’s cat might have taken shelter there.

**Food:** Staying warm requires extra calories, so feed your pet accordingly when the temperature drops. Talk to your veterinarian for advice on feeding your pet.

**Water:** Always have fresh, clean water available for your pet. If your pet is kept outdoors, be sure to check his water frequently since it may freeze.

## **Special Holiday Tips**

The holidays can create special dangers for your pets. Here are a few tips to help keep your pets safe this special time of the year.

- Increased activity and visitors during the holiday season can upset your pet's routine. Try to keep your pet on his regular schedule for feeding and exercise and be sure he gets plenty of love.
- If you are planning to take your pet with you when visiting friends and relatives during the holiday season, be sure to contact them in advance to find out if your pet is welcome. Because of the excitement during this season, it might be best for you and your pet to board your pet or hire a reputable pet sitter.
- Alcoholic beverages, holiday treats such as chocolates, rich, fatty food scraps and bones can be harmful or toxic to pets. Keep your pet on his regular diet and caution visitors against giving your pet "special treats."
- Never put ribbons or yarn around your pet's neck and do not allow your pet to play with plastic or foil wrappings or six-pack beverage holders.
- Cover or tack down electrical cords.

**Some Other Dangers Common to This Season of the Year are listed below**

### **Plants**

- Mistletoe: very toxic, all parts especially the berries
- Holly: moderate to very toxic, especially the berries and leaves
- Poinsettia: leaves and stems low in toxicity
- Christmas Greens (Balsam, Juniper, Cedar, Pine & Fir): low level of toxicity
- Hibiscus: if ingested may cause vomiting or bloody diarrhea

### **Holiday Decorations**

- Bubbling Lights: mod. - lethal toxicity, depends on amount of fluid inhaled or ingested
- Fireplace Colors (salts) Moderate toxicity; can cause gastrointestinal irritation &/or convulsions
- Angel Hair: low toxicity; can cause irritation of the eyes, skin and gastrointestinal tract
- Christmas Tree Preservative Solution: low toxicity, depends on formulation and quantity ingested
- Snow Sprays/Flock: low toxicity from inhalation can occur
- Christmas Tree Ornaments: non-toxic, intestinal obstruction and choking are problems
- Styrofoam: low toxicity, can cause choking from mechanical obstruction
- Icicles (tinsel): non-toxic; causes intestinal obstruction and choking
- Snow Scenes: toxicity may come from organisms in the water

### **Gifts and Miscellaneous Items**

- Button/Disk Battery: Caustic, high toxicity depends on position of battery in gastrointestinal tract
- Plastic model Cement: moderate toxicity
- Adhesives, Super Glue: low toxicity, difficulty occurs when body parts bond together
- Artist's Supplies (Crayons, markers, Pencils, Water Paints) low toxicity – irritation
- Petroleum-based paints: low toxicity; possibility of aspiration
- Toys: avoid toys with parts small enough to be off and swallowed or painted with toxic materials
- Aftershave Lotion, Colognes, Perfumes, Alcoholic Beverages: Ethanol is a moderate toxic depending on amount ingested; essential oils are especially toxic