



JANUARY 2011

## Baby It's Cold Outside...



Jack Frost is here and nipping at New York City pets' cold, wet noses and furry paws. As you and your dogs brave the city's icy sidewalks, slush puddles and freezing wind and your cats search for cozy spots and entertainment indoors, West Chelsea Veterinary invites you to keep the following in mind: Taking just a few moments to protect your pets against winter weather, indoors and out, can ensure good health and comfort.

### Keeping Your Indoors Pets Winter-Safe

The weather outside is frightful, but a cold indoors without a safe, warm spot to curl up to can be pretty troubling too. Dogs and cats will search for toasty places when snuggling up indoors, even if it means cozying up to space heaters and fireplaces. Take the time to "pet-proof" your home by securing potentially dangerous heat sources against animals looking to get too close.

Also, while some city pets may not get outside as often in the winter, they could still use some good mental and physical stimulation. We feel you can't go wrong by playing indoor games like fetch or hide-the-toy and by giving them lots of extra love.

*TIP: Remember, if you feel ready to get back into the warmth, chances are your pets may be ready to do the same.*

### Eating and Drinking More Can be a Good Thing in Winter Months

Pets who go out into the cold need to eat and drink a little bit more during winter months to help them burn extra energy and stay warm. Keep them hydrated and their skin less dry by providing them with plenty of water to drink.

Pets will expend more energy trying to stay warm during outdoor walks and activities than when inside.

### Preparing to Head Out into the Cold

It can be said that some dog breeds were better built for frigid temperatures than others. Smaller dogs and dogs with thin coats can quickly lose crucial body heat when they're directly exposed to cold. Despite the possible embarrassment some dogs may feel when made to wear a "cute" sweater, many really could benefit greatly from the warmth they can provide. From retaining body heat to preventing chapped pads and flaky, irritated skin, booties can also keep their paws warm and provide extra traction on ice. Look out for ice-melting chemicals like de-icers and anti-freeze, which can be found on NYC streets and sidewalks. Both are extremely toxic to pets when licked off of paws or lapped from a puddle. Booties can do a great job of keeping chemicals off of bare paws.

### During and After Winter Walks

If booties are not for you and your dog, bringing a towel or warm, dry cloth on longer walks can be a great idea and can be used to wipe



*From the indoors to the outdoors, all you need to know about cold weather and pets*

*TIP: Reward reluctant pets with a treat each time they allow you to put on their booties and winter gear.*

off and warm paws that may be icy, wet and stinging. Also, salt used to melt ice and avoid slips on sidewalks can be great for clearing walkways and protecting against the elements. However, the same salt can wreak havoc on pets' paws, sometimes causing cracked skin and even bleeding. Upon returning from your walk, we recommend rinsing and drying your pets' paws, legs and bellies to remove any chemicals, salt or ice they may have come into contact with.



## Winter Grooming – It's Not Just for Looks

- Making sure your long-haired dogs' longest hair is trimmed (and not dragging on sidewalks) can be essential in minimizing the potential of clinging pieces of ice, salt and de-icing chemicals that can dry on pets' coats and skin and cause irritation.
- Brushing pets on a regular basis can eliminate excess hair while also stimulating oil production in their skin.
- Moisturizing pets' pads to protect from chapping, salt and chemical agents can be as simple as rubbing on a bit of petroleum jelly or a wax-based paw protectant (like Musher's) into paw pads before heading outside. But watch out, because such

protectants can often be a little messy. So, be sure to towel off their paws before reentering your home.

- We advise bathing pets' less during cold months since too frequent washings can remove essential oils and increase the chances of developing dry, flaky skin.

For more information about cold weather pet care, please visit our Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/westchelseavet](http://www.facebook.com/westchelseavet) Please contact us right away if you believe your pets have been over-exposed to cold or if you have any questions about this topic.



*From our family to yours, Happy New Year from West Chelsea Veterinary!*

