

WARMING UP FOR WINTER

As the temperature rapidly drops we can fall is upon us as we shiver along our way. I am thinking about the animals and what they need to be happy and comfortable during the shorter, colder days of winter. Here are some things to think about:

There are many stray and feral cats in this county doing their best to stay alive with no human to care for them, to feed them and to keep them warm. Kitties often crawl up under the hoods of cars to take in the heat from the previously running engine and since there is a hood on the car it keeps warm air inside the engine space. Please, before you turn on your engine, on these cold days, honk your horn a time or two to ensure the cat can escape and not get eviscerated in the car's fan belt. I have seen too many sad situations.

If you know there are unowned cats in your neighborhood leave food and water out for them if you possibly can. Most domesticated cats cannot find enough mice and other varmints on their own to sustain their life.

Many people feel fine about feeding a few homeless cats, but don't want them reproducing and finding themselves trying to feed dozens of cats. Sammie's Friends will pay for your cats to be spayed/neutered through our Cat Crisis Program. (info on www.sammiesfriends.org).

All animals that are outside in the cold need some warm and dry shelter that they can go into to protect themselves. Short hair dogs like pitbulls, short haired pointers, etc. should never be left out in the cold without shelter. If you have an igloo for your dog or cat please put plenty of blankets or some type of bedding (straw is a good insulator and a good choice) they can snuggle up in. Without that an igloo is a cold icebox to sleep in. Even going for a walk many dogs feel more comfortable with a jacket on.

If your horse does not have a barn or stall, to go to for cover, a light weight rain proof horse blanket can keep your horse warm when it is extremely cold and/or raining. Of course, a covered stall or barn is better, but a blanket will be helpful. Horses and other livestock also need

to be protected from wind; some kind of a structure with sides on it will help keep the wind off your animals. It is important to provide an area where your livestock won't be standing in mud; it is very bad for their hooves. You can buy stall mats or even building a pad out of straw is helpful. Just keep adding straw until there is a nice pad protecting the animal from the mud.

Often herds of cows can get enough protection by huddling together underneath some trees, but if you only have one or two head of cattle you need some kind of wind barrier and structure to protect them. Big piles of straw are great for pigs to huddle in for warmth. Straw is a great insulator for any animal.

When animals are outside where it is cold they often burn more calories in the winter, so increasing their food during these months is important. In particular older horses often have a hard time keeping weight on during the winter months.

If you feel cold there is a good chance your pets feel cold too. Care for them accordingly. Don't forget the barn yard animals. They need shelter, plenty of food and water to maintain throughout the winter. If you need advice on what to do to provide for your farm animals during the winter months call Animal Control (530-265-1471) Stefanie Geckler, the Supervising Animal Control Officer, says they are available and always prefer providing education before enforcement.

Happy Fall and Winter to all, two and four-legged, finned and feathered.

Cheryl Wicks is the Co-Founder and President of Sammie's Friends.