

## **IT'S COLD OUTSIDE!**

In the last few weeks the weather has changed dramatically from the last vestiges of summer to the full on cold of winter. We bundle up ourselves to go out in this much colder weather. Sometimes, even with several layers of clothing it is still cold.

If you're cold there is a good chance your dog or cat can be too. Your pets should be in the house with you, especially if it is a short haired dog, like a pitbull. Some long haired dogs have a protective undercoat and they will do much better in the elements than others. Of course, even the long haired dogs have paws, that if exposed to severe elements for a long period of time, will have damaged feet. Even the huskies in the Iditarod wear booties to protect their feet from a 1,000 miles of cold wet snow.

If you take your dog out to play in the cold notice how it reacts to the weather. If the dog seems cold put a doggie coat on it. These are great for small dogs and short haired dogs.

Sometimes I see a dog riding in the back of a truck when it is freezing outside and then add in the chill factor and cold metal of the truck bed and it is even colder. I can't imagine that is a lot of fun for the dog. Dogs will put up with almost anything to go with the family, even if they aren't comfortable. That's how much they love us. We need to repay that loyalty by looking out for them too.

If you park your car outside, before you start the engine, toot the horn or hit the hood of the vehicle to make sure no kitty is lying in their next to the warmth of an engine recently turned off. Every year we end up with mangled kitties at the shelter who have been caught in fan belts and other parts in the engine cavity. Even if you don't own a cat there are often stray kitties in the neighborhood who are looking for a warm safe place to sleep. Can you imagine being a cold little kitty with nowhere to go and needing to sleep with one eye open so that another critter doesn't grab you while your sleeping.

If your pet is outdoors, an igloo, which to some extent can recirculate the animals own body heat, is much better than a dog house, which provides little comfort. Think how cold your own house is in the winter if you turn the heat off. If you really want to be considerate set up a nice little warm place where a stray kitty could crawl in and go to sleep and stay safe and warm.

Owning a pet is a serious responsibility. We owe it to them to keep them warm and comfortable in the winter and cool and comfortable in the summer.

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