

What is Frostbite?

When an animal has been exposed to cold temperatures and high winds, its body will begin to reduce the blood flow to outer areas like the ears, feet and tail. The blood flow is rerouted to help the vital internal organs. The lack of blood flow and oxygenated blood to the outer areas can result ice crystals forming within the body tissues, resulting in tissue death. This is known as Frostbite.

Due to their hair and coat, an animal may not show signs of frostbite right away. Therefore, it is very important to get the animal to a vet if you suspect it may have frostbite.

Signs & Symptoms:

- ▶ Skin discoloration on the feet, tail and ears
- ▶ Pain and swelling of the feet, tail or ears
- ▶ Blisters
- ▶ Sloughing of the skin
- ▶ Skin Ulcers



Diagnosis:

A veterinarian will need to examine any animal suspected of having frostbite. They will need to know how long the animal was exposed to the cold and freezing temperatures, its location while it was exposed, and the area of the animal's body where the injury is suspected.

Treatment:

If you suspect your animal may be suffering from frostbite, remove it from the cold environment.

The next step is to begin re-warming the affected area, **SLOWLY!!!** This can be done simply by placing the animal in a warm room and covering it with a blanket.

- ▶ **DO NOT** place your animal in a hot water bath!!!! This can cause severe injury or death!
- ▶ **DO NOT** rub or massage the affected areas.

Contact your veterinarian for further instructions and treatment.



Prevention:

The best way to avoid frostbite is prevention! If you have a dog (or cat) that will tolerate having something on their feet, try booties. They come in many sizes and colors, and help protect the animal's feet from the cold. For smaller dogs, shorthaired dogs, and puppies, a coat may be appropriate.

Limit the amount of time your animal will be exposed during times of severe cold and freezing weather. After walks or other outdoor activities, be sure to wipe your animal's paws and legs, paying close attention to the areas between their toes. Get rid of any clumps of snow or ice that may be found.

Provide an adequate shelter for your animal anytime it will be outside. The best shelter should be off the ground, away from drafts, and have warm dry bedding. Insulation, heating lamps or heaters can be used. Caution should be used when ever a heater or heat lamp is used, to avoid fires.



Hypothermia:

Hypothermia is a cold related emergency that occurs when an animal's body temperature drops below what is normal for that breed.

The most common cause of Hypothermia is prolonged exposure to cold winter temperatures. If an animal with Hypothermia is left untreated, it could develop frostbite, or if it gets too cold, die.

Signs & Symptoms:

- ▶ Depression ▶ Stupor ▶ Muscle Stiffness
- ▶ Lethargy ▶ Difficulty breathing
- ▶ Weakness ▶ Fixed & dilated pupils
- ▶ Shivering ▶ Coma
- ▶ Low heart & respiratory rate

Diagnosis:

To confirm hypothermia, the animal's temperature must be taken using a thermometer. A normal temperature for a dog can range from 100.5°F to 102.5°F. A normal body temperature for a cat can range from 100°F to 102.5°F. Puppies and kittens have a much lower body temperature and are more susceptible to hypothermia.

Treatment:

Mild cases of hypothermia can be treated at home by covering your pet with thick, warm or insulated blankets. Remember to monitor the animal's body temperature closely. More moderate to severe cases of hypothermia need to be treated by a veterinarian.

Prevention:

The easiest way to prevent your animal from hypothermia is to limit the length of time your animal is out in cold and freezing weather. Make sure that the animal has an adequate and warm place to get out of the cold if it has to be outside for any length of time.

For more information about pets and cold weather, please visit:

ASPCA: www.aspca.org/pet-care

PetPlace: www.petplace.com

Or contact your veterinarian or local animal control agency.

For pets or other animals in distress in cold weather, contact your local Police Department, Sheriff's Office, Animal Control agency, or Animal Shelter.

Frost Bite & Hypothermia In Dogs & Cats

Tips, Treatment and Prevention
for keeping your pet healthy.



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