



Emergency vets issue ‘cold weather’ warning to pet owners as temperatures plummet

The UK’s leading pet emergency provider, [Vets Now](#), is bracing itself for a busy spell as the Met Office has today (16th January, 2019) issued a near-nationwide level-2 "alert and readiness" cold weather warning, expected to hit the UK over the weekend.

Vets Now emergency hospitals and clinics up and down the country expect to see a rise in cold weather related cases when temperatures plummet due to adverse weather including frost, fog, snow and gale force winds affecting our pets.

Extreme wintry weather is a threat to our pets, with dogs, cats, rabbits and other small pets all at risk during adverse weather. Common issues emergency vets will treat include; cats and dogs suffering from frostbite on paws, breathing difficulties from dogs who have short-noses and pets injuring themselves due to icy and slippery surfaces, or injuries on snow-covered hazards such as rocks.

Vets Now head of veterinary standards, Dr Laura Playforth said: “When the weather turns, pets and their owners need us more than ever. Our veterinary teams up and down the country are working hard, making extra preparations for the forecasted cold snap.”

Laura added: “Heavy snowfall and freezing temperatures pose a serious threat to your pet. Whilst we are always here to give your pets the best possible care in the event of an emergency, we would like to help in any way we can to prevent these emergencies from ever happening in the first place. We’ve produced some advice to help you protect your pet and prevent unwanted illness or injury. It’s essential you’re aware of what to do when faced with a pet emergency, especially when it’s out of hours and your vet is closed.”

For more hints and tips, and advice on what to do in a pet emergency, visit www.vets-now.com.

[Vets Now has produced some helpful advice to pet owners, to help keep your pet safe and warm as temperatures prepare to plummet](#)



Note to media: these tips can be attributed to Dr Laura Playforth, Vets Now's head of veterinary standards, an authority in emergency and critical care in pets.

1. If it's too cold for you, it's too cold for your pet

Keep your pets inside, especially overnight, when temperatures plummet, otherwise they run the risk of getting frostbite or hypothermia. If your pet is showing signs of either of these, contact your vet immediately. Remember, too, that temperatures indoors can also plummet. If you're out, try to make sure temperatures in your home can never fall below a reasonable level (around 20C).

2. Go on shorter, more frequent walks

It's worth considering taking your dog on shorter, more frequent walks to protect them from weather-associated health risks.

3. Wash and dry your pet's feet following walks

Salt and chemicals used to grit roads and pavements can be an irritant to your pet's pads, especially if they have any small cracks or redness between the toes, so always wipe their paws with a cloth and warm water when you get home.

4. Don't let your pet fall victim to antifreeze

Antifreeze poisoning is a major hazard during cold snaps, especially if it leaks from a car's radiator or spills on the ground while being sprayed on frozen car windows. Remove ice from vehicles using an old-fashioned scraper, keep containers of antifreeze locked away and clean up any spills quickly, as even small amounts can be deadly.

5. Keep a close eye on your car

Cats who are allowed outside during cold spells may try to cosy up on a warm vehicle engine. Check underneath your car and bang on the bonnet before starting the engine to make sure you don't have a feline hitchhiker.

6. Swot up on your pet's breed

Just like humans, some pets, such as husky dogs and Persian cats, are more tolerant to cold weather than others. Make sure you do your homework on your breed. For example, Dobermans, chihuahuas and great Danes require a little extra protection in the cold. Short-nosed pets are also more at risk from extreme temperatures due to inherited breathing difficulties.

7. Consider a sweater or coat

It's a myth that dogs and cats are more resistant than people to cold just because they have fur. Even long-haired pets are at risk in cold weather. Consider putting a dry sweater on your pet before going outside and always take spares in case they get wet.

8. Make sure your pet is wearing a collar and is microchipped

Pets are more at risk of becoming lost and disoriented in snowy or blizzard conditions. Ensure your dog or cat's identification tag and microchip details are up-to-date and relevant.

9. Beware of heat stroke



Believe it or not, [short-nosed dogs](#), in particular, are at risk of suffering [heat stroke](#) if they exercise vigorously in freezing temperatures and then settle in a warm house. See [Charlie's story](#) below to find out more.

10. Avoid icy lakes and ponds

Steer clear of water that has frozen over. There is no guarantee it will support the weight of your pet. If your dog or cat falls through ice it may be deadly.

11. Feed your pets well

Pets who spend long periods outside may require more calories in the winter to generate enough energy to keep them warm – talk to your daytime vet about your pet's nutritional needs. But [don't overfeed them](#).

12. Watch out for icy steps, roads and pavements

Older pets, particularly those with arthritis or mobility issues, are at risk of slipping and injuring themselves on slippery surfaces, especially steps or when jumping in or out of vehicles.

13. Make sure your pet has access to fresh water

It's common sense but you should check your pet's water bowl regularly and fill it up whenever it's low. Few animals can survive for long without hydration, especially in extreme temperatures. You should also be careful not to let your pet's water bowl freeze over.

14. Beware of hazards covered in snow

Our emergency vets have treated pets who have injured themselves falling into potholes covered in snow or from hurtling into snow-laden rocks and steps.

15. Be prepared for cold weather

If the weather forecasters predict an extreme cold snap or snow and blizzards, make sure you have a [pet emergency plan in place](#). This includes stocking up on food and any prescription medication, knowing who to call in an emergency and how you might travel to the vet in an emergency.

Case Study:

Dog recovers after emergency vets treat him for breathing difficulties and hyperthermia – in the snow.

A fun weekend jaunt in the snow nearly ended in tragedy for a cute Boston Terrier last winter.

Just five hours after his walk three-year-old Charlie was being rushed to [Vets Now in Milton Keynes](#) after collapsing at home. Owner Dominique Nel, 23, was distraught to see little Charlie unable to move his back legs and then stop breathing.

It later emerged he'd been suffering from heat stroke as a result of exercising too vigorously in the snow and then going into a warm house.



Charlie was admitted to Vets Now suffering from heat stroke

She said: “Charlie loves playing football and swimming in the sea and I innocently thought he would love the snow — little did I know it was going to turn out the way it did.

“The first I knew something was wrong was when Charlie, who had been sleeping under the duvet, fell off the bed. I thought he was just playing, but I soon realised that I needed to phone the emergency vets.

“I was crying hysterically and to make matters worse we couldn’t use my mum’s car because of the snow and had to wait 20 minutes for my dad to pick us up.

“The nurse on the phone was really calm and told me step by step how to keep him with us.”

Domenique’s dad, Alfred, drove Charlie from their Milton Keynes home to the nearby Vets Now clinic, which provides out-of-hours emergency care for pets in the area.

At the clinic Charlie was put in an oxygen chamber and staff worked to get his temperature under control, which had risen to more than 41C.



Charlie’s temperature had risen to more than 41C

Domenique, a retail supervisor, said: “It all happened very quickly and it was so upsetting to see Charlie like that. He’s our life at the moment — and is so cute and playful.

“The staff at Vets Now were really calm and allowed me in to see Charlie as I was very distressed. It helped as he looked so much better. I can’t thank them enough for what they did.”



She added: “It took about four days for Charlie to recover at home as his muscles were sore and I also had to keep him calm, which wasn’t easy.”

Rebecca Lang, senior vet at Vets Now in Milton Keynes, said Charlie was suffering from a condition called hyperthermia, which means a high temperature, and is usually seen in dogs who have exercised too much on a hot day.

She said: “Hyperthermia occurs when dogs are no longer able to self-regulate and keep their temperature at the normal level.

“Charlie was suffering from laboured breathing as a result of the hyperthermia so we placed him under a cool shower, gave him oral fluids and some medication to help him relax, and then put him in an oxygen cage for 30 minutes.

“After about five hours his breathing and body temperature was back to normal and he was walking around and wagging his tail so he was discharged home.”

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For media enquires contact Gail Chalmers on gail@gailchalmers.com or 07919411402

Vets Now notes to editor:

- Vets Now was established in 2001 and is the leading provider of emergency veterinary care for small animals in the UK.
- With 24/7 Pet Emergency Hospitals in Glasgow, Manchester and Swindon, and 59 out-of-hours clinics nationwide, Vets Now is committed to delivering a responsive emergency and critical care service for cats, dogs and other small animals.
- Vets Now also partners with more than 1,400 veterinary practices across the UK to provide their clients with a seamless out-of-hours emergency care service.
- Vets Now employs over 1000 staff.
- Vets Now remains at the forefront of emergency veterinary care through its commitment to clinical excellence and training, employing many of the country’s top Emergency & Critical Care Specialists.