

**AT HOME**

We need to take special care of our pets to protect them from winter conditions. Pets need to have a warm place to stay. If your pet does not live indoors with you, a warm place needs to be provided for them, along with nutritious food, fresh water that doesn't freeze, and careful attention to their wellbeing. House pets will still need to be carefully watched when they do go out. Cold weather often calls for shortened walks. You can increase the frequency of the walks to make up for their decreased length. If you let your pet outside alone, you need to make sure that their time outside is limited and they are not forgotten. Pets are affected by the cold just as we are; they can get frostbite from the cold and can die of exposure if forgotten outdoors. Young, small, thin and/or senior pets may be most sensitive to the cold.

Winter [confinement and holiday treats](#) can create a challenge for pets trying to overcome obesity. If your pet is not getting the same level of outdoor exercise, discuss alternative exercise and adjusting your pet's food intake with your veterinary team.

Check to see if your pet has [vaccinations](#) or other preventive care procedures that are due. The spring can be busy with heartworm and other parasite prevention measures, the winter can be a good time to address these concerns.

Some things, like [allergy testing](#), are best done in winter when your pet may not be as bothered by itching and scratching.

Cats that go outdoors and hunt should be treated for [intestinal parasites](#), not only through the hunting season but also once they come indoors for the winter. Talk to your veterinary team about the right solution for your pet.

Helpful Hint

Boots are a great way to protect your dog's feet from ice and salt. Dog boots are usually sold in sizes based on the width of the pet's foot. You want to buy a boot just larger than the width of your pet's foot. Use a pencil and paper, trace your pet's foot onto the paper and then measure the width. Take this measurement with you when you go shopping for boots. When buying jackets, look for a jacket that provides good coverage of the back and chest but doesn't interfere with your pet going to the bathroom.



According to Guinness World Records, the oldest dog on record lived to be 21 and the oldest cat was stated to be 38.

Winter Considerations for Pets at Home and Away

**AWAY**

Travelling in winter is common; especially to sunny destinations. If you are thinking of taking your pet with you, make sure to start your planning early. Different countries will have different requirements for the importing of animals. If these requirements are not met, you may be denied entry to the country or your pet may be quarantined. Quarantine periods can be very long in some countries. These are some of the common considerations:

Travel Documents – check with your country of destination to determine what paperwork needs to be completed. Some countries require you to fill out and submit paperwork for approval before you travel.

Vaccinations – most countries will require proof of vaccination against rabies. Some countries may also require a rabies titre. This is a blood test to determine the level of antibody against rabies virus present in your pet. This can be a time consuming step so make sure you start your planning well in advance.

Health Exam – many countries will require that the pet be examined by a veterinarian for any signs of illness within 10 days of travel.

Parasite Prevention – some countries will require treatment for fleas, ticks and tapeworm within a few days of travel, often these treatments need to be administered by a veterinarian.

Microchip – you may be required to have your pet microchipped. This is a simple procedure that can be performed by your veterinarian. If your pet is already microchipped, check to see that your information is current.

Airline Travel – check with your airline to see if your pet can travel in the cabin with you and what restrictions exist. For cabin travel, airlines will have guidelines for the size of travel crate that can be used. In most cases it will need to fit underneath the seat. There may be a limit on the weight of pets to be flown and many airlines will not fly pets during extremes of temperature.

Also, think about what your pet may need once you arrive. Parasite risks especially can vary from one country to another so be sure to discuss any potential risks with your veterinary team as you plan your trip.

This newsletter provides some tips for winter season preventive care. Preventive care is important year-round. Use season changes as reminders to talk to your vet.