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Lifesaving Tips for Outdoor Animals

Reminder to Pet Owners: Safe Outdoor Dogs Act and Protecting Animals During the Freeze

Winter Freeze File

HOUSTON (January 10, 2024)—Houston SPCA has an urgent message for pet owners to pay special attention to their outdoor pets as the National Weather Service reports that **freezing** temperatures are expected hit early next week. A pet's age, breed or health may impact how they tolerate inclement weather. **It is strongly recommended that all companion animals be brought indoors during the freeze.** If a pet is living outdoors during extreme weather, the [Safe Outdoor Dogs Act](#) requires pet owners to provide access to drinking water and protection from extreme temperatures with adequate shelter.



The Houston SPCA offers some lifesaving tips during a winter freeze to help keep outdoor animals safe:



Provide MORE: Food, Water and Shelter: Outdoor pets need to consume 25 to 50 percent more calories than usual because the cold weather tends to deplete their energy. Make sure to provide fresh water for your pet and use plastic food and water bowls as your pet's tongue can stick to metal or the water can freeze. Outdoor pets should have a shelter or dog house that will protect them from the wind and is elevated. Add in blankets, towels or hay to help keep your pet warm and dry.

Exercise Care with Cats, Canines and Cars: In the winter, the interior of an idle car can act as a refrigerator, so never leave pets in a car. Keep your cats indoors during cold weather as they may sleep under the hoods of cars to stay warm. *Give an outdoor cat a chance to escape by banging loudly on the car hood before starting your car.*

Equine & Farm Animals: Be sure horses have access to a barn or a three-sided structure with a roof so they can escape the wind and cold. While not all horses will need to be blanketed, blankets will help horses keep warm and dry, especially in the rain or freezing temperatures. Frequently check water troughs and buckets to ensure the water is not frozen. Provide access to extra grain and hay if no grazing is available. Feed your horse unlimited forage during extreme cold to help them increase and regulate their body temperatures.

Wildlife: Just like humans, wildlife seek refuge from the cold. Set out birdhouses or leave natural debris like fallen leaves and branches in your yard to create hiding spots for small animals. Set up bird feeders with high-energy seeds and suet. Also, keep bowls of fresh, unfrozen water out for birds and other critters. More tips on helping wildlife can be found [here](#).



Please visit HoustonSPCA.org for more tips on how best to care for outdoor animals. The community is encouraged to call 713-869-7722 (SPCA) if they see an animal in immediate distress, or report cruelty at www.houstonspca.org.

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