



## Emergency vets issue ‘cold weather’ alert to pet owners as Met Office issues further warnings

6<sup>th</sup> January 2021. The UK’s leading pet emergency service, [Vets Now](#), is bracing itself for a continued busy spell as the Met Office has today issued further weather warnings for snow, ice and wind for large swathes of the UK over the next three days.

Vets Now emergency hospitals and clinics up and down the country have seen a rise in cold weather-related cases as January temperatures plummet with recent adverse weather including frost, fog, snow and high winds affecting our pets.

Today’s Met Office warnings come amid fresh caution that a new Beast from the East could bring extreme cold and heavy snow to the UK within a fortnight.

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 telehealth, Dave Leicester, who is responsible for a team of experienced vets at Vets Now’s [Video Vet](#) service 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 continued forecasted cold snap across large parts of the UK.”

Dave 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.”

There are more than 60 Vets Now clinics and hospitals across the UK that are open through the night, seven-days-a-week, and day and night on weekends, to treat any pet emergencies that may occur. All of Vets Now’s premises have a vet and vet nurse on site at all times, and remain open during lockdown. Vets Now also offers an [online video consultation](#) service to make professional veterinary advice easily available from home.

For more hints and tips, and advice on what to do in a pet emergency during cold weather, visit [www.vets-now.com](http://www.vets-now.com)

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



*Note to media: these tips can be attributed to Dave Leicester, Vets Now's head of telehealth, 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.

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