

PREPARE YOUR PETS FOR WINTER

(GALVESTON – January 10, 2011) The cold weather is officially in season and as the mercury begins to dip, it's time to make the winter months safe and comfortable for your pet. Various areas in our county are inclined to experience extreme temperature changes including; below freezing temperatures, heavy rain, and possibly hail. It's important to remember that a pet's age, breed or illness may affect how they tolerate the chilly winter months ahead. The Galveston Island Humane Society advises that it is best that all pets live indoors due these unpredictable weather conditions.

- **Housing.** Provide proper shelter for your pet whether they live indoors or outdoors. Indoor pets should have their bed or crate placed in a safe and warm place that is away from drafts. Outdoor pets should have a well insulated house that is wind and water resistant and elevated off the ground so wind and moisture can't seep inside. Install a door flap to protect against drafts and gusts of wind. Extra blankets and straw will also help to increase your pet's warmth. Room and floor heaters should be kept away from your pet as they are an obvious fire hazard and can cause serious injuries as well.

- **Food & Water.** Make sure to provide fresh, clean water for your pet every day. 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 talk to your veterinarian to confirm the right amount of food for your pet.

- **Cars are Refrigerators.** A car can act as refrigerator in the winter. Never leave your dog or cat alone in a car during the winter months as they will freeze to death.

- **Cats and Cars.** Keep your cats indoors during the winter. Not only can outdoor cats freeze, they sometimes sleep under the hoods of cars to stay warm. When the motor is started, the cat can be injured or killed by the fan belt. If outdoor cats live in your area, give them a chance to escape by banging loudly on the car hood before starting your car.

- **Warmth.** If you have a short-haired breed of dog, consider getting him / her a sweater with a high collar or turtleneck with coverage from the base of the tail to the belly to keep them warm. Never shave your dog down to the skin in the winter months as a longer coat will provide more warmth.

- **Antifreeze.** Dogs and cats are attracted to the sweet smell and taste of antifreeze which contains ethylene glycol. A tiny lick can kill your dog or cat so make sure to check your car for leaks on your driveway or gutter. Keep containers tightly closed and clean up spills immediately. Check your local retailer for "pet safe" antifreeze.

- **Rodenticides.** Rat and mouse poisons are commonly used during the winter months. Place them out of reach as they can cause fatal bleeding or kidney failure in your pet. The Galveston Island Humane Society encourages you to be especially mindful of your pets this winter and to keep telephone numbers for your veterinarian and a local emergency veterinary service in a convenient location.