



DID YOUR DOG FEEL THE COLD ON WINTER?

Animal Insider

Volume #1 Issue #4

November 2014

Why put clothes on your dog

There are still many dog owners who have seen their dogs shiver violently after exposure to winter temperatures but hesitate to put clothing on their dogs for fear of appearing odd.

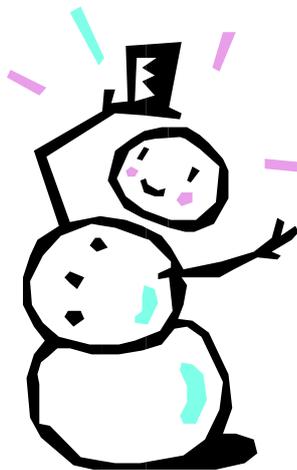
If you are concerned about your dog being cold, there is certainly no harm in putting clothing on him.

If you are still on the fence, consider this: Sure, dogs come equipped with their own external layering system, but some dogs have lighter layers of fur than others, and some are not genetically suited to the environments in which they find themselves transplanted. So your dog may in fact be extremely uncomfortable with the winter temperatures — **as uncomfortable as you would be if you went outside without clothing.**

A sweater or jacket can be helpful during the cold seasons, especially if your dog is reluctant

to go outside in the snow to relieve himself, but also if you tend to keep your home's internal heating system set low, depending instead on blankets and sweaters for your human occupants.

How warm your dog is able to physically keep himself may depend on his breed, size and even age, but if he just doesn't have a heavy hair coat, there is only so much curling up he can do to conserve heat. Smaller, light



bodied breeds, toy breeds, and breeds that naturally have very short or thin hair coats benefit from a warm dog sweater for

when they need to go outside, or for just hanging around the house. A sweater can make a significant difference in your dog's feeling of well-being.

Of course, short, thin hair is not the only prerequisite for outer clothing. Dogs that tend to have short-cropped hair should also be given a sweater to protect them from very low temperatures. Also, older dogs with weaker immune systems and dogs with diseases that impair hair growth typically need an extra source for warmth, and this can be easily provided by a sweater or jacket, even indoors.

Conversely, larger dogs with dense hair coats do not have a need for additional insulation, and would be very uncomfortable if they were forced to wear outer clothing, possibly to the point of physically overheating. Their fur is already genetically designed to protect them from extreme winter temperatures.

Finding a Good Sweater

Once you have decided to get a sweater for your dog, you will need to begin by considering material. While wool is very warm and one of the best insulating materials, take into account how often it will need to be washed, and whether it will make your dog more uncomfortable due to itching. A good blend of

washable wool and cotton or acrylic may be the best bet.

Second, just as you would measure your own neck, chest and waist before buying a piece of clothing, measuring your dog is the best way of assuring the best fit. Why do you want it to fit? So

that your dog cannot easily pull the piece off, so it doesn't drag on the ground, and so it doesn't get caught on anything during normal movement. You want the piece to be snug without being tight.

Special points of interest:

- *Why put clothes on your dog*
- *Finding a Good Sweater*
- *How to find the size your dog needs*
- *How to protect your dog's paw pads in winter*
- *What if you have an outside dog*
- *Construct an insulated house around the dog's crate*
- *Groom your dog?*
- *Guard against canine winter illnesses*

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How to find the size your dog needs

The most important areas to measure are around the neck, around the largest part of the chest, and the distance from the neck to the waist. The sweater's length should end around the waist, leaving the lower bellow free. Knowing your dog's actual weight will also help you to determine the correct size. If possible, take your dog along to the store with you try the clothes before buying them, as returns are very difficult when it comes to clothing for animals.

It almost goes without saying, but we will mention it anyway, **dogs cannot, or should not, wear pants** — only sweaters and jackets.

Check especially around the arms (in the "armpit" area) and around the neck to be sure there is freedom of movement, but not too much excess fabric. Also, choose pieces that are easy to put on and take off, nothing you have to pull too tightly over your dog's head or that cause you or the dog to struggle.



consideration is checking for any additional parts — like zippers, hooks, buttons or tags. The best pieces will have nothing that can be chewed off and swallowed. Some outside jackets are made with hooks to attach a leash to, but they are meant to be worn only under direct supervision and should be removed once the dog is left to her own devices. That is, when you are not directly observing her, such as during sleep/work/other hours.

Another important

How to protect your dog's paw pads in winter

Many protective balms are available to help protect your dog's paws, and even some human products can do the trick. Do your research. Once you find the balm that you like, take these steps:

Before using the balm, make sure the paw is ready. Good grooming is essential for healthy winter feet. If your dog has long hair use a clipper (beard trimmer with the shortest plastic guard equipped works well) to keep the hair between the paw pads short so that it is even with the pad. Trim the hair around the paws especially if they have a lot of feathering to make sure none of the hair comes into contact with the ground. This will help prevent ice balls from forming between and around the paw pads which can be painful and result in trauma. It also makes it easier to apply the balm to the pads. Keeping the nails trimmed is important year-round but even more so in the winter because long nails force the paw to splay out and make it more likely that snow and ice will accumulate between the paw pads.

Apply a thin even layer of balm just before going out for a wintery walk. After the walk wipe your dog's paws with a warm washcloth to remove snow, ice and ice melt. Then apply another layer of balm to soothe any irritation and to keep them from drying out. Bag Balm can be

found in most drug stores and pet stores. If you can't find Bag Balm then Vaseline is an acceptable alternative.

Another good option to protect your dog's paws is dog boots. These boots are made by various manufacturers and can be easily found online and in pet stores. They consist of a sock like boot with a Velcro strap to help keep them in place. Some have soles which provide the additional benefit of adding traction. These boots protect the paw by helping them stay dry and preventing exposure to salt and de-icers. Be sure to check that the strap is not too tight; the boot should be snug so that it doesn't slip off but not so tight that it constricts the paw. Dogs tend to not like wearing the boots at first so acclimate them to wearing them by putting them on your dog for short periods of time in the house. Praise them and gradually increasing the length of time as they get used to them.

Be aware that salt and most de-icers can be toxic to our canine friends. Try to keep your dog away from roads and sidewalks that have been heavily treated with salt and chemical de-icers. There are pet friendly de-icers available for use on your own

sidewalks and driveway and you should encourage your neighbors to do the same. Immediately after a walk, wash your dog's paws with warm water as described earlier to help prevent them from ingesting any salt or chemicals that may be on their paws. While outdoors, do not let your dog eat slush or drink from puddles near heavily treated roads and sidewalks.

Dogs are susceptible to frostbite and hypothermia just as people are so use common sense as to how long your walks can be. Keep them short and watch for signs of hypothermia such as shivering, anxiety and moving slowly.

Winter can be tough on our dog's feet but good grooming and protecting the paws by using a balm or booties will go a long way to keeping your dog's feet healthy.





What if you have an outside dog

We highly recommend you to bring the dog inside, but if you still want to keep him outside here is what you can do to help him:

⇒ If you have an outside dog (such as a sled dog), ensure that he has access to a shelter and bedding inside the shelter. Fresh straw provides a suitable layer of insulation against the cold of the ground for an outside shelter; be sure to change it regularly though.

⇒ An outdoor dog shelter should have a sloped roof, insulation and heating, es-

pecially for very cold climate locations. For rainy winters, ensure that the entrance way is protected so that rain cannot get into the shelter.

⇒ Bring all outdoor dogs inside if the cold spell becomes exceptionally cold and long; even the barn is warmer than an outdoor dog shelter.



Construct an insulated house around the dog's crate

⇒ Measure the dog crate. Cut strand board or plywood to fit, leaving space for insulation.

⇒ Cut Tyvek (drywall) to fit outside crate, within the plywood.

⇒ Nail the plywood together around all sides, including the top. Slide Tyvek in—it should fit tightly.

⇒ Save a piece of Tyvek to cover the entry to the crate. (Another option is to throw a blanket over the entry.) This has been tested with a thermometer and the dogs were warm.

⇒ Keep water filled. Provide comfy warm quilts for your dog(s).

Groom your dog?

Avoid trimming, shaving or cutting your dog's hair because a dog's full weight coat is his source of warmth during winter. It is important to maintain a good grooming regime through winter too, as matted hair is less efficient at keeping out the snow and cold rain, and does not insulate the dog as well. Consistent grooming can alleviate dander problems in dogs living through dry winters, should this be a problem for your dog.

⇒ Only bathe indoors and make sure your dog is completely dried

before letting him outside. Give less or no baths in a week. This will help you to keep them away from severe cold problems. If important, give shorter baths with warm water and dry your dog as quickly as possible.

⇒ Keep the hair around paw pads well trimmed. This will help pre-

vent ice and snow balling up between footpads. After walks outside, check paw pads for cracks, cuts, and any foreign debris.

⇒ If your dog won't wear dog booties, be sure to clean off the salt and snow removal chemicals after every walk; the chemicals can be toxic and the salt will become an irritant.



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Warnings

- ⇒ *Never leave your dog outside for a long time in freezing temperatures.*
- ⇒ *Never leave a dog inside a cold car. When the heater is off and the temperatures drop rapidly, it's like sitting in a freezer, and the air doesn't circulate but stays very cold.*
- ⇒ *Never keep an indoor dog outdoors suddenly during winter. Dogs need time to acclimatize to temperature changes. If you want to house an indoor dog outside over winter, start acclimatizing him in autumn so that he gets used to the temperature changes and his coat responds by growing thicker.*
- ⇒ *If your dog does fall into an icy lake or river, call for help. Do not endanger your own life trying to rescue a dog.*

Guard against canine winter illnesses

As with humans, dogs can fall ill during the colder months especially when cold or as a result of winter conditions, with respiratory infections in damp climates, frostbite, and consumption of toxic substances being some of the principal concerns.

⇒ Keep your dog dry and warm. This will help to guard against respiratory infections, such as kennel cough (the human equivalent of a cold). If your dog gets a respiratory infection, seek veterinary attention immediately.

⇒ Frostbite can be a problem for some dogs, especially hairless varieties. Check the ear tips and tail tips in particular – if they look and feel cold, appear white, red or gray, and/or are dry and hard, then frostbite may have occurred. If you suspect frostbite, wrap your dog's extremities in blankets or towels to warm them gradually and see the vet immediately.

⇒ Keep winter-time toxic items away

from dogs. Anti-freeze tastes unusually sweet to dogs and they will lick it if they can access it, with only four teaspoons worth needed to kill a dog under 10 pounds. If your dog does ingest it, see a vet immediately as treatment needs to be given within hours to save your dog's

life. Another toxic problem during winter is rat bait, used in greater amounts due to everyone living in close proximity over winter. Keep all toxic items well out of the reach of dogs and other pets and clean up any spills immediately (lock pets away while you attend to it).

⇒ Your dog's arthritis and osteoarthritis can be exacerbated by cold weather. Talk to your vet about medication, treatment options, and ways to keep your arthritic dog fit and warm through winter.

