



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **COLD WEATHER ADVICE FOR PET OWNERS FROM THE HUMANE SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES**

**WASHINGTON (Winter 2005)** — The Humane Society of the United States is urging pet owners to take a few common sense precautions to safe guard their pets against bitter cold temperatures. Despite their “fur” coats, domesticated animals like cats and dogs depend on humans for protection from elements such as freezing temperatures. The HSUS is offering the following suggestions to help keep all pets safe through the cold winter months.

- Don't leave pets outdoors when the temperature drops below freezing. Dogs need outdoor exercise but take care not to keep them out for lengthy periods during very cold weather. Short-coated dogs may feel more comfortable wearing a sweater during walks. Dogs and cats are safer indoors in all sorts of weather. Animals should never be left outdoors unattended as they risk being stolen or otherwise being harmed. Signs of hypothermia include: weak pulse, dilated pupils, decreased heart rate, extreme shivering, pale or blue mucous membranes, body temperature below 95 degrees, stupor and unconsciousness. Consequences of extreme hypothermia may include neurological problems including coma, heart problems and kidney failure. Check with your veterinarian for more information.
- Wind-chill can threaten a pet's life, no matter what the temperature. Outdoor dogs must be protected by a dry, draft-free doghouse that is large enough to allow the dog to sit and lie down comfortably, but small enough to hold in his/her body heat. The floor should be raised a few inches off the ground and covered with cedar shavings or straw. The house should be turned to face away from the wind, and the doorway should be covered with a flap of heavy waterproof fabric or heavy plastic.
- Pets spending a lot of time outdoors need more food in the winter. Keeping warm depletes energy. Routinely check your pet's water dish to make certain the water is fresh and not frozen. Use plastic food and water bowls rather than metal; when the temperature is low, your pet's tongue can stick and freeze to metal.
- Warm car engines are dangerous for cats and small wildlife. Parked cars attract small animals who may crawl up under the hood looking for warmth. To avoid injuring any hidden animals, bang on your car's hood to scare them away before starting your engine.
- De-icing chemicals are hazardous. The salt and other chemicals used to melt snow and ice can irritate the pads of your pet's feet. Wipe the feet with a damp towel every time after coming in from outdoors – even if you don't see salt on walkways.

- Antifreeze is a deadly poison. However, it has a sweet taste that attracts animals and children. Wipe up spills and store antifreeze out of reach. Better yet, use antifreeze-coolant made with propylene glycol; if swallowed in small amounts, it will not hurt pets, wildlife, or people.

The Humane Society of the United States is the nation's largest animal protection organization representing more than 9.5 million members and constituents. The non-profit organization is a mainstream voice for animals, with active programs in companion animals and equine protection, disaster preparedness and response, wildlife and habitat protection, animals in research and farm animal welfare. The HSUS protects all animals through education, investigation, litigation, legislation, advocacy, and fieldwork. The group is based in Washington and has numerous field representatives across the country. On the Web at [www.hsus.org](http://www.hsus.org).

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