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Temperatures in the teens in Texas may be gone for now, but it is Texas and weather is always unpredictable. While you are winterizing your house, your car, and yourself, the staff at the Burleson Animal Shelter says don't forget about your pets.

A pet's fur is not a perfect insulator. If your pet's coat gets wet, the fur loses some of its insulation, especially if the pet's fur is short. Your dog's toes, nose and ears are even more vulnerable in cold weather. It doesn't take long for snow or ice to freeze on the pads of your dog or cat's feet. When it is cold outside, keep your younger, older and sick pets indoors. They don't have the fat, metabolism or the full fur coat needed to stay warm.

When you bathe your dog in the colder months, be sure to completely dry him before taking him out for a walk. Never leave your dog or cat alone in a car during cold weather. A car can act as a refrigerator in the winter, holding in the cold and causing the animal to freeze to death.

A dog or cat's body temperature is normally between 101 degrees and 102.5 degrees. Signs that your pet may be developing hypothermia include violent shivering followed by listlessness, a weak pulse, lethargy, muscle stiffness, problems breathing, lack of appetite, and/or a rectal temperature below 98 degrees. Wrap your pet in a warm blanket or coat that have been warmed in the dryer for a few minutes then call your veterinarian immediately. Symptoms that your dog or cat has developed frostbite include pale gray or blue skin, initially, that turns into red puffy skin; pain in the ears, tail or paws upon touch; skin that stays cold; and shriveled skin. Again, call your veterinarian immediately.

When you bring your dog in from the sleet, snow or ice, thoroughly wipe off your dog's legs and stomach because he can ingest salt, antifreeze or other potentially dangerous chemicals while licking his paws. Antifreeze is thick and very sweet.

If the temperatures dip into the low 40s, and your dog stays outdoors, it should have a warm dry covered shelter and fresh water. It is best if that shelter is in a garage, shed or under a carport or awning, protected from drafts. The bedding should be insulated with foam board, old blankets or plastic then line the bottom with an old sleeping bag, coats, fleece or inexpensive hay. Check the bedding

daily to make sure it is not wet. Make sure your dog has plenty of food, especially protein, because dogs need more calories in the winter to stay warm and to keep their coats healthy.

Never let your dog off the leash on snow or ice, especially during a snowstorm. Dogs can lose their scent and easily become lost. More dogs are lost during the winter than during any other season, so make sure your pet always wears ID tags. The Burleson Animal Shelter will implant your pet with a microchip for \$15, regardless of where you reside. The microchip has a unique identification number that links the pet to the owner's information.

Keep your cat inside. Outdoors, felines can freeze, become lost or be stolen, injured or killed. During the winter, outdoor cats sometimes sleep under the hoods of cars. When the motor is started, the cat can be injured or killed by the fan belt. If there are outdoor cats in your area, bang loudly on the car hood before starting the engine to give the cat a chance to escape.

During the holidays, keep your pets away from poinsettias and other potentially toxic plants, chocolate, holly berries, leaves, and tinsel. Call your veterinarian immediately if you think your pet has eaten something dangerous.

For more information or to microchip your pet, call the Burleson Animal Shelter at 817-426-9283. The pet's owner must provide proof of rabies vaccination to get the microchip. Shelter hours are 11 a.m.-6 p.m., Tuesday-Friday and 11 a.m.-4 p.m. on Saturday. The shelter is located at 775 S.E. John Jones Dr.