

Winter 2024 Small Animal Newsletter

It's hard to believe it's coming to the end of 2024 so as the temperatures drop and winter settles in, it's important to take extra steps to keep your furry companions safe, warm, and healthy. While snow can be beautiful, it also brings unique challenges for our pets. Here's what you need to know this season!

Cold Weather Pet Safety Tips

1. **Keep Pets Warm Indoors:** Just like humans, pets can get cold too! Limit time outdoors during freezing temperatures, especially for short-haired breeds, senior pets, and small animals.
2. **Watch for Signs of Hypothermia:** Shivering, lethargy, and weakness can all be signs of hypothermia. If your pet seems overly cold, bring them inside and warm them gradually with a blanket. Contact us if you're concerned.
3. **Protect Paws:** Salt, ice, and snow can damage paw pads. Use pet-safe ice melt and wipe paws after walks.
4. **Don't Clip the Coat:** Your pet's winter coat provides natural warmth. Keep up with grooming, but avoid shaving fur too short in the colder months. Consider a coat for your pet but always make sure that they are comfortable wearing it.

Holiday Hazards to Avoid

- Chocolate, xylitol, alcohol, and rich holiday foods can be toxic. Keep festive treats well out of reach!
- Tinsel, ornaments, and cords may look like toys but can pose serious risks if chewed or swallowed.

Traveling with Pets?

Ensure they're secured in a carrier or pet seatbelt and bring along blankets, food, and water. Never leave pets alone in a cold car—temperatures can plummet quickly.

Can you pinch an inch?

With the onset of winter weather, it's very tempting for pets to snuggle up at home, go on fewer walks, and in the process gain some extra weight – which can lead to a variety of health issues.

How can I tell if my pet is gaining excess weight?

In dogs a simple test is to run your hands over their chest – you should be able to easily feel (but not see) their ribs without pressing too hard. They should also have a “waist”, when viewed from both above and the side. By contrast, if you can pinch an inch or more, and if your pet's stomach sags down and bulges out, then a diet may be in order. It's also important to keep an eye on your cat's waistline as well!

So – why is it a problem? Unfortunately, excess weight places extra demands on many organs of the body. Carrying extra weight can lead to, or worsen, many conditions such as: arthritic joint problems, heart disease (putting the heart under increased strain), raised blood pressure, diabetes (a particular risk factor in cats), and decreased stamina.

How can you try to ensure your pet remains the right weight? Losing weight can be challenging for all of us, and our pets are no exception; so the most important thing is to try to ensure your pet is on the most suitable diet in the first place. Additionally, your pet's dietary requirements change throughout their lives and our knowledgeable team are happy to advise you on the most appropriate diet for your pet. We are here to help! To achieve weight loss, pets need a combination of specially formulated calorie controlled diets and more exercise. There are many health benefits to keeping your pet a healthy weight, so if your pet has added a few pounds or seemed to have slowed down, please give us a call.

So as we come to the end of 2024 – the whole team at Hafren would like to wish all our clients a Very Happy Christmas and New Year.

Hafren Veterinary Group

Newtown

01686 625344

Llanidloes

01686 413475

Knighton

01547 528292

Cross Gates

01597 851500

