

## **WINTER CARE FOR YOUR PETS**

**By Linda, HSCC Humane Complaints Coordinator**

**The trees are wearing their beautiful fall colors, but you know what that means. Winter is not far behind.**

**Now is the time to start planning the winter care for your pets.**

**The Humane Society of Cambria County advocates that ALL pets should be indoor household companions.**

**If your dog has been inside all summer, now is NOT the time to make him an outside dog. Most of his undercoat has already shed and he won't be able to stay warm.**

**The outside dog needs a lot of attention during winter months. Cold temperatures, wind and frozen water present major problems.**

**A doghouse should only be big enough for the dog to stand up and turn around. A house that is too large will not allow the dog to build up and maintain his body heat.**

**Make sure the house is airtight with a door only large enough to allow the dog to enter and exit in comfort.**

**Putting straw on the floor, and a flap on the door, will give added protection from cold and wind. Remember to change the straw regularly. Straw, which is wet and frozen, is very uncomfortable for your dog.**

**When putting water out for your dog, start with slightly warm water and check it often. Water should never be allowed to freeze.**

**Check your dog's feet everyday. If there is ice build up between the pads, carefully remove it. If the pads are cracked or bleeding, bring the dog inside and check with your veterinarian for instruction on how to remedy the problem.**

**Give your dog a little extra food in the winter. Dogs burn more calories when they are trying to stay warm. Only dogs with a dense undercoat should be kept outside. A long outer coat does not necessarily mean a dense undercoat. Not all large dogs can be kept outside—it all depends on his coat.**

**When temperatures hit the twenties and teens, please bring your dog inside even if only to a heated basement or garage.**

**Never keep any of the racing breeds such as greyhounds, whippets, salukis or Afghans outside. These breeds do not have enough body fat or coat to stay warm.**

**Even your inside dog may need extra care in the winter. A short-coated dog may need a sweater when going outside to the bathroom or for a walk. Just as you do for the outside dog, check the feet for ice buildup and cracked or bleeding pads. This can happen in a very short period of time.**

**With winter heating costs skyrocketing, many of us are lowering the thermostat. If you put on a sweater, your dog may need one too. If he is shivering or staying curled up in a ball, he's cold.**

**Many people think they don't have to worry about the cat. They assume he'll find some place to stay warm. This is not true. Cats can have ice build up or cracked, bleeding pads as well. The cat is also prone to frostbite on feet and ears. Cats should ALWAYS be kept indoors.**

**For the next six months, follow the above tips and stay warm and cozy with your pets.**