

## Frost on the Pumpkin

I looked outside this morning and what did I see, no not eight tiny reindeer but frost on the pumpkin. I know what that means—a visit from the reindeer isn't far away and it's time to winterize the house, car, and dogs. Yes, my dogs and yours need preparation for the blustery winter weather just like our houses and cars.

If you and your dog are fortunate enough to escape winter or you take Fido on a winter holiday to the South remember they will need year-round protection from heartworms, fleas, and ticks. Planning to fly make sure that all vaccinations are current and check with your airline about how the animal is to be transported. Make a reservation for your dog no matter if it can fly in the cabin or has to be in the cargo hold. You may also wish to consider getting a calming medication for your dog, turbulent flights are not only hard on us but on your pet as well.

If you are driving to your destination and you have a pet that gets car sick, try ginger snaps or ginger capsules which are a safe preventive for most dogs. Your vet can give you a prescription for an anti-motion as well. If your drive requires a motel/hotel for an overnight stay make sure your choice is a dog-friendly one. AAA, DogFriendly.com, BringFido, and OfficialPetHotels.com are excellent resources to check.

No matter how you plan your winter escape make sure your dog as a registered microchip with up-to-date information and a collar with a current and legible ID tag in case he gets lost.

For those of us who cannot escape winters path here are a few tips to make it a little easier for you and your dog. No matter what mother nature delivers, dogs need to go out as they need exercise for their well-being. It doesn't matter if your area is urban or rural, dogs can encounter many dangers during the winter months.

I think that the majority of us can relate how hard winter's cold temps and frigid winds are for us. Those conditions can be even more difficult for our pets. They may be wearing a fur coat but that doesn't mean they can endure freezing temperatures. My own dogs love the show and cold and they may be able to handle it better than other breeds, still, their feet get ice balls. Musher's wax can be applied to the pads of their paws for protection. There are any number of dog boots available on the market for protection—if you can get your dog to wear them. If you walk your dog on the roads or sidewalks remember the salt and ice melt can hurt your dog's feet.

The arctic breeds seem to relish the sub-zero temperatures of winter but those dogs with short hair that spend any length of time outdoors may need a coat. This is critical for puppies, thin dogs, older dogs, small dogs and those with chronic health issues. If you happen to be a woods walker with your pup you might want to consider brightly colored garments for both of you.

Like us, dogs get itchy dry skin in the cold of winter. Try to keep winter baths to once monthly. An easy fix to dry for skin is to add a small dose of olive or coconut oil to his food. A half of a teaspoon for dogs less than 30 pounds and a teaspoon for dogs 30 to 90 pounds and a full tablespoon for those that are over 90 pounds

Keep your dogs leashed near icy ponds and if you have a dog that pulls boots with good treads or added ice grippers can keep both of you from an unseasonable dip. Antifreeze spills present another risk to your pet as even a quick lick can cause kidney failure. If you're a city dweller be aware of electrified manhole covers and lampposts with loose wires.

Use common sense to keep you and your dog safe this winter. If you are cold and there is a Nor'easter on the way most likely Fido doesn't find it any more appealing than you do.