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Pet Care

GUIDE

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in the winter



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to existing
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Exploring
guinea pigs
AS PETS

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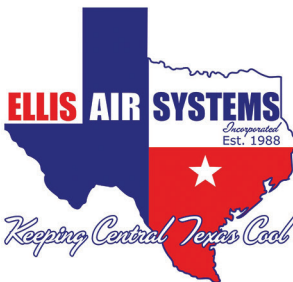
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HOW TO KEEP PETS SAFE IN WINTER WEATHER

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HOW TO INTRODUCE A NEW PET TO EXISTING PETS



Many people are excited by the prospect of introducing a new pet into their homes. In the midst of such excitement, it can be easy to overlook the potential feelings existing pets may have about sharing their homes with new animals. Unfortunately, pets don't get to know one another with a handshake and a "hello." In addition, pet owners cannot force companion animals to like one another. What they can do is make

the introduction process as positive as possible. According to Healthy Paws Pet Insurance, 42 percent of American households are multiple-pet families, so peaceful cohabitation is possible. Whether the introduction involves animals of the same species or a hopeful friendship between cat and dog, follow these tips to increase the chances for a successful first meeting.

EMPLOY SENSE OF SMELL

Some dogs and cats will "posture" if they make eye contact with a new animal, according to PetMD. Submissive or dominant responses can cause stress to the animals and may create a negative first meeting. Sometimes it's best if pets meet through scent instead of sight. Separate the pets in different rooms or cages, allowing them to grow accustomed to the smell of the other animal before actually meeting it. Exchange blankets with each pet's scent between the cages.

CONTAIN AND RELEASE

Let the new pet roam the house for a little while before containing it to a room or cage. This allows the animal to start leaving its scent around the house. Follow the

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same technique with the other pet. The animals will grow a deeper bond through scent articles and grow accustomed to the sounds and smells of each other.

INTRODUCE DOGS OR CATS ON NEUTRAL TERRITORY

Existing pets may feel the need to defend their territory or protect their owners if they meet a new animal inside of the house. When the time comes for a face-to-face meeting, introduce the two animals outside of the home in a neutral area, such as in a neighbor's yard or in a park, offers The Humane Society of America. Reward positive behavior during this initial encounter with treats.

HAVE NEW TOYS AND ITEMS AVAILABLE

Dogs and cats can both be territorial. Even if they accept the new animal, they may not want to share their toys, food bowls or other baubles. Make sure there are items for both of the pets so there will be no bickering or actual fights.

The introduction process is not something pet owners should rush. Such a process can take a few days, weeks or even longer. Pet owners who remain patient and encouraging may find that their pets ultimately learn to live together peacefully.



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UNDERSTANDING HEARTWORM



Conscientious pet owners understand they must be on the lookout for a host of issues that can affect the health and well-being of their pets. One such issue is heartworm.

WHAT IS HEARTWORM?

The American Heartworm Society notes that heartworm is a disease caused by foot-long worms that live in the heart, lungs and associated blood vessels of affected pets. Known as heartworms, these worms can cause severe lung disease, heart failure and organ damage. Some instances of heartworm may even prove fatal.

WHO GETS HEARTWORM?

Heartworm disease affects dogs, cats and ferrets. Heartworms also live in wolves, coyotes, foxes, and sea lions. And while such instances are rare, heartworms have even been found in humans.

HOW IS HEARTWORM TRANSMITTED AMONG PETS?

Mosquitoes transmit many diseases, and they even play a role in the transmission of heartworm. The AHS notes that adult female heartworms living in infected dogs, foxes, coyotes, or wolves produce microfilaria, which are microscopic baby worms that circulate in the animals' bloodstreams. When mosquitoes feed on the blood of these infected animals, they pick up microfilaria. Within 10 to 14 days, these microfilaria mature and develop into infective stage larvae. When mosquitoes then bite another animal, these larvae are deposited onto the surface of the skin of those animals, ultimately entering their new hosts through the wound created by the mosquito's bite. The larvae then spend the next six months maturing into adult heartworms.

HOW LONG DO HEARTWORMS LIVE?

Upon reaching maturity, heartworms can live for five to seven years in dogs and for two to three years in cats. According to Peteducation.com, heartworm in ferrets can be rapidly progressive and fatal.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF HEARTWORM?

Heartworm symptoms can vary depending on the type of animal that is infected. Dogs infected with heartworm may exhibit few or no symptoms in the early stages of the disease, only gradually exhibiting symptoms as the infection persists. Such symptoms include mild persistent cough, reluctance to exercise, fatigue after moderate activity, decreased appetite, and weight loss. As heartworm progresses, dogs infected with the disease may develop swollen bellies due to excess fluid in their abdomens. Dogs infected with large numbers of heartworms may develop sudden blockages in their heart, which can lead to cardiovascular collapse, threatening the dog's life.

Cats may exhibit subtle or dramatic symptoms of heartworm. Coughing, asthma-like attacks, periodic vomiting, loss of appetite, and weight loss are some of the more subtle symptoms of heartworm in cats. But some cats may struggle to walk, experience fainting spells or have seizures as a result of heartworm. The AHS notes that the first sign of heartworm in cats is sometimes sudden collapse or sudden death.

Ferrets with heartworms may seem tired all the time and exhibit shortness of breath even after just a few minutes of activity. Ferrets may also experience fluid buildup in their abdomens due to heart failure and blocked blood vessels.



CAN PET OWNERS PROTECT THEIR PETS FROM HEARTWORM?

The AHA recommends that pet owners get their pets tested for heartworm every 12 months. In addition, the AHS advises pet owners to give their pet heartworm preventive 12 months a year.

More information about heartworm is available at www.heartwormsociety.org.

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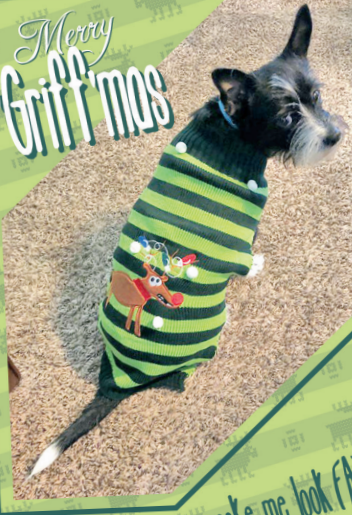
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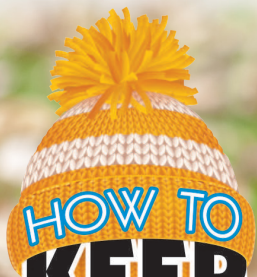
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HOW TO KEEP PETS SAFE in WINTER WEATHER



The arrival of cooler temperatures sparks various changes. Chilly air and precipitation can be dangerous, especially to pets that are unaccustomed to extreme changes in temperature.

Pet owners may be well aware of the hazards of warm weather, including the threat of leaving pets in hot cars. But cold weather also has its share of risks. Heed these tips to keep pets safe and secure.

SCHEDULE A WELL VISIT

The American Veterinary Medical Association suggests scheduling a visit with a veterinarian to check for any medical issues. Cold weather can aggravate symptoms of certain conditions, such as arthritis. A thorough examination can shed light on potential problems.



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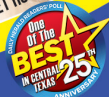
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KEEP HOMES HUMIDIFIED

Going in and out of the house and moving from cold air to dry indoor heat can affect pets' skin. Itching and flaking may result, causing pets to scratch at such areas. Maintain humidity in the home for comfort. The ASPCA also says to reduce bathing to help preserve essential oils on the skin.

PROTECT PAWS OUTDOORS

Pet paws are sensitive to sand, ice, snow, and chemical ice melts. Massage petroleum jelly or another protectant onto paw pads, or consider the use of pet booties.

CONSIDER A SWEATER OR VEST

Some pets are more tolerant to the cold than others. However, some dogs and cats may benefit from a sweater, vest or coat designed for pets to offer a little more insulation.

UPDATE IDENTIFICATION & CONTACT INFORMATION

Snow and ice can mask scent cues that help pets find their way home. Update contact information and make sure pets' collars are on tightly.



KEEP PETS INDOORS MORE OFTEN

Pets should not remain outdoors for long stretches of time in frigid temperatures, even if they are accustomed to roaming during other seasons, advises The Humane Society of the United States.

PROVIDE OPTIONS FOR SLEEPING

Come the winter, cats and dogs may need new sleep spaces to avoid drafts and stay warm. Give them other spots they can call their own.

KEEP COOLANT & ANTIFREEZE LOCKED AWAY

Coolant and antifreeze are lethal to dogs and cats and should be kept out of reach. Clean up any spills from vehicles promptly.

PROVIDE FRESH FOOD & WATER

Pets may burn more calories trying to stay warm. Be sure the animal has a little extra food and plenty of water to stay satiated and hydrated.

Winter weather requires pets owners to make changes so pets can remain happy and safe.



The City of Harker Heights Pet Adoption Center



The Harker Heights Pet Adoption Center is located at 403 Indian Trail in Harker Heights, Texas and is open on the following days and times.

Sunday: 10am - 2pm

Monday: 1pm - 4pm

Tuesday - Friday: 1pm - 7pm

Saturday: 10am - 6pm

To contact the Pet Adoption Center during normal business hours call 254.953.5472.

After normal business hours and on holidays please contact the Harker Heights Police Department at 254.953-5400.



Follow us at:

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BIRDS NEED EXTRA ASSISTANCE IN WINTER

Cold weather can be taxing on many of the birds individuals discover in their backyards. Although some species migrate to warmer climates each winter, many stay and attempt to ride out winter. Birds that tend to stay include finches, sparrows, titmice, jays, woodpeckers, chickadees, and cardinals.

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology says that, in much of North America, winter days can be windy and cold for birds, and nights are even more challenging. In winter, birds no longer have berries and lush vegetation to consume and insects have died or gone underground. Many birds can benefit from a little help from their human friends.

SHELTER

Wild Birds Unlimited says shelter for birds is hard to come by in winter. Trees have shed their leaves, and evergreens may not be as abundant or protective.

People can provide shelters for birds, which may include traditional birdhouses, windbreaks and snow shields. Roost boxes are another option and one that can accommodate small flocks that will group together and share their body heat.

Use leaves and branches to provide natural camouflage and help attract birds to the shelter. Offer yarn, fabric scraps, cotton, and other insulating materials that birds can use to help make their shelters more comfortable.



FOOD

Birds require high-calorie and high-fat foods in the winter so they can keep up their metabolism to generate warmth. Also, since birds' feeding habits vary depending on the type of bird, it may be necessary to place feeders at varying heights to maximize access.

Feeders should be located out of the wind and in an area that offers safe refuge from predators. The National Wildlife Federation also says individuals should put out sizable feeders and/or use multiple feeders to provide ample food during snow and ice storms. Feeders should be checked regularly and kept full.

Consistency is also important because birds will grow accustomed to being supplemented with food and may depend on such supplements to survive. Bird Watcher's Digest suggests a variety of foods for birds. Black-oil sunflower seeds, peanuts, suet, cracked corn, millet, thistle seed, safflower, and various fruits can help many birds thrive. It's also suggested to include mealworms, which can be purchased at bait stores or pet stores. These larvae of beetles can be presented in a shallow dish with slippery sides so the worms cannot crawl out.

Birds typically need extra support to survive harsh winters. Offering food and shelter during these bleak months can help.

Pet Rest Memorial Park

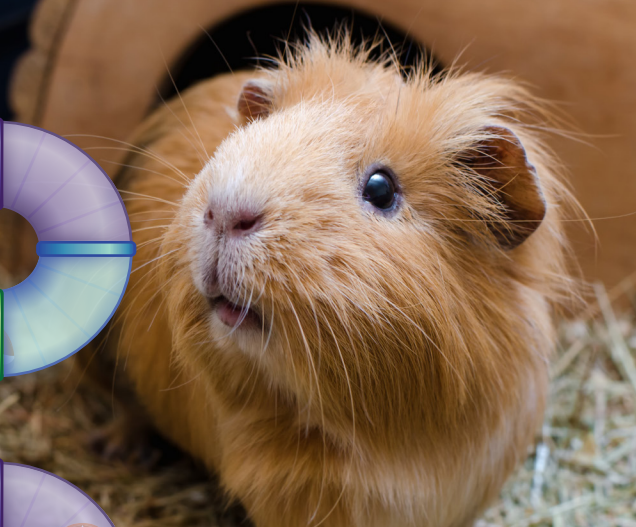


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exploring

Guinea pigs

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Impulsive decisions with regard to family pets can be disastrous. Parents who do not take the time to decide if pets fit their lifestyles may end up regretting their decisions and/or returning the animal, which can be hard on pets and families alike.

Many prospective pet parents may mistakenly believe that small pets, such as guinea pigs, are much easier to care for than cats or dogs. That false impression may compel them to adopt guinea pigs without fully exploring just what it takes to raise these small, personable pets.

TIME COMMITMENT

According to the Humane Society of the United States, daily interaction with and attention from guinea pig owners is essential for the well-being of guinea pigs.

Guinea pigs require regular grooming (daily for long-haired breeds), and cages also must be maintained. The HSUS recommends thorough weekly cleanings as well as spot-cleaning every few days.

CHILDREN

The HSUS points out that young children are more likely to mishandle

guinea pigs, increasing their risk of dropping or squeezing the animals. Some guinea pigs may respond to being mishandled with fear that leads them to bite their handlers. Guinea pigs respond most favorably to being gently held.

COMPANIONSHIP

Guinea pigs are social animals, and they do best with the companionship of another pig. Solitary guinea pigs can quickly grow lonely and bored, which can be problematic for pet parents whose time is already stretched thin.

ALLERGIES

Prospective owners should confirm that they and members of their household are not allergic to the animals. Visit an animal shelter or the home of a friend and spend some time with the guinea pig in the room where it spends most of its time. If you suspect you or a member of your household is allergic, contact an allergist for further testing or discussion.

Guinea pigs make great pets, but prospective guinea pig owners should do their homework before bring these lovable creatures home.

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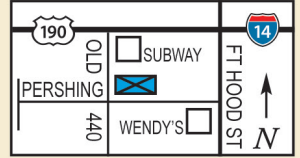




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