

While we have enjoyed finally seeing the sun after the non-stop rain, winter still has quite a bit to go and cold temps are back this week. We will always be on our bully pulpit for pet owners to please bring your pets inside when the temps are at freezing and below. For those pets that must stay outside please make sure they have shelter and protection from the cold, wind and rain. Cold air is also very dry (just think of your chapped lips) and livestock and pets need more water than you think in the winter.

Keeping outside water from freezing for your outside pets/livestock is easy. Just go to your local feed store, pet store, or on-line and purchase in-tank water heaters or heated water buckets. They do need to be plugged in (can run a long outdoor extension cord if need be) and are quite safe. Hauling water is no fun at all and these heating devices will ensure your pets and/or livestock will have clear fresh water no matter how low the temps go. It is possible, of course, for the water 'source' like the stand-pipe/faucet to freeze and there is heat tape or even heated hoses that can help. For our area of Alabama, generally, if your pets/livestock have a large tank of water that is kept from freezing, the daytime higher temps and sun will thaw out the hose/pipe/faucet so it can refill.

Just like us, animals also need shelter from wind, rain, snow & ice since wind chill affects animals just like it does us humans. A dog house (with solid sides, top and floor) needs to be located so the wind doesn't blow into it and also sized correctly so that the dog's body heat can build inside to keep your pet even warmer. And DRY bedding is essential so please check the bedding often to make sure it isn't wet, or even missing. A wet blanket, or moldy pile of hay, or hard piece of plastic does nothing to help your pet deal with the cold so just don't think because your dog has a plastic igloo that they can 'handle' this weather – if you think that, we suggest you try spending the night in that igloo yourself.

Please also take your pet's age and health into account as young, healthy animals can handle inclement weather a lot better than older animals. An older horse might need to be blanketed in cold weather and an older dog with arthritis may need much thicker bedding to cushion aching joints and tired muscles. More frequent brushing to remove dead hair & dirt will also help your pet stay warm as a clean coat will provide better insulation against the weather. Yes, there are breeds more acclimated to cold weather and they might be loving this weather but far more of our southern pets are NOT used to this weather and need appropriate protection from the cold.

We have 270 pets in our care and every one of them is sleeping on a blanket or comforter because of the wonderful generosity of so many pet loving people – thank you all so very much! But we do need a continuous influx of 'bedding' as some dogs destroy their beds and some just reach a point of no return so thank you ahead to all who bring us their old comforters and blankets to help our pets. We keep the kennel doors closed and the heat up when the temps fall below 40 degrees so our pets as comfortable as possible because we care!

If you are worried about an animal that does not have appropriate shelter, is not being cared for, or seems to be a stray, please contact the appropriate Animal Control Officer so they can investigate. Those numbers listed for towns are for issues INSIDE that city limits, all others are considered 'county' and must be called to the Elmore County Sheriff's Office. All are area code 334. Wetumpka: 567-5321; Millbrook: 285-6832; Tallassee: 283-6586; Eclectic: 541-2149; Elmore County Sheriff: 567-5227