

## **Cold Weather Tips for Your Pets**

Each year as the weather turns colder, Charlton Animal Control is asked “Is it against the law to leave a dog (or other animal) outside all winter long?”

The MSPCA answers the question this way: “According to Massachusetts General Law Chapter 272, Section 77, the owner or keeper of an animal must provide it with proper shelter and protection from the weather. Therefore, a dog or other animal may remain outdoors provided it is in good health and weight (for its breed), has access to an appropriate shelter, and is not of an age or breed where temperatures could be potentially dangerous (very young or old animal). Violations of this law may result in a sentence of up to 5 years in state prison, or up to 2.5 years in a county jail and/or a fine of up to \$2,500. The MSPCA does, however, advise that even those domestic animals that are acclimated to the outdoors should be allowed access to the inside during frigid temperatures.” *Source:* [http://www.mspca.org/site/PageServer?pagename=lawenforce\\_FAQ](http://www.mspca.org/site/PageServer?pagename=lawenforce_FAQ)

To help pet owners understand what it means to provide proper shelter and protection from the weather, we offer the following guidelines:

A structure that is large enough for the animal, whether it be livestock or pet, to stand naturally, turn around and lie down inside of the structure without being exposed to the elements of weather. The roof and walls of the structure are waterproof and windproof. Bedding must be kept dry and changed regularly to preserve insulating qualities. Examples of bedding include hay, straw, shavings, blankets, or dog beds. During cold weather a moveable flap must be placed over the entrance to a dog shelter to preserve the dog’s body heat.

Fresh food and water must also be provided. Once temps drop below freezing, keep and eye on those water bowls as the water will freeze quickly.

Dogs (and other pets) get cold too – please prepare their shelter now so they remain safe this winter.

For more information, visit us on line at [www.townofcharlton.net/animalcontrol.htm](http://www.townofcharlton.net/animalcontrol.htm). We also maintain a lost/found list, including pictures whenever possible. You will also find links to low cost spay/neuter programs, adoption information, and many other excellent pet related resources. Feel free to always call us - we are always happy to assist!

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