



Tree House Humane Society

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Winterizing and Warming Tips

Preventing Water From Freezing

The cats need water, especially when dry food is the predominant food provided, which is often the case in winter. Here are some ways to keep the water from freezing outdoors:

- The ideal solution, though only plausible in secure circumstances, is an electrically heated water bowl. Please note that the water will evaporate relatively quickly. The bowl also can be used for wet food, though it will quickly dry the food up. Wal-Mart normally carries two different sizes of electric water bowls.

A 5 quart dish with 6 foot protected cord is available for \$24 from KV Vet Supply (item #86041) - www.kvvet.com, or call 1-800-423-8211. Ask about their other heated bowls.

- The Pet Solar Sipper (model no. 10011) uses solar energy to keep the water from freezing and is available for \$29.95 (including shipping). It functions at 18 degrees F. and above. Order online at http://solarsippers.com/animalsipper_std.html
- The Snuggle Safe disc is about the size of a Frisbee intended to keep pets' bedding warm. Under normal indoor conditions, you put it in the microwave for five minutes and it will stay hot for 12 hours. For outdoor use, it has been reported that the discs can be safely heated up to 8 minutes in a 1,000 watt microwave to last as long as possible outdoors. Depending on the microwave, the discs can conceivably melt so you have to do a little trial and error to see how long you can heat it up.

The discs are just the right size to fit inside the under rim of some large dinner plates and water bowls. In the frigid outdoors their heat lasts 2 to 3 hours. If you can afford it, it is convenient to have two sets of discs: you can heat and bring one set to the colony, and pick up and bring back the set used the last time you were feeding.

Snuggle Safe is also great (wrapped in cloth the cats cannot tear open) for providing warmth inside their shelters. Prices online vary from \$24.99 on sale to \$34.99. Order online at <http://www.dog.com>

- Place the water bowl inside a large Styrofoam cooler. Cut a hole for the cats to enter on one end of the cooler and put the bowl at the other end. The Styrofoam's insulation will slow down the freezing process. Or use a small Styrofoam cooler, cut a hole in the top, line the inside with a plastic bag, and fill it with water.
- Use a thick plastic, thermal-type of water dish. Wider and deeper is better than narrow and shallow.
- If the cats come to eat right away while you are there, put a little extra water in their wet or dry food.

- Get an old tire off its rim, and stuff it with rocks. Wedge a container (like a large bucket) in the hole in the tire and put the water in there. The black tire will absorb the light from the sun during the day and heat the rocks within the tire. The rocks will radiate the warmth enough to keep the water from freezing.
- Place a large, deep plastic water dish, filled with rocks, beneath the drain from an indoor heating system. The water is warm coming out of the pipe, which helps keep the water in the dish from freezing.
- Place the water bowl near where heating pipes are located inside a wall. One trick with alleyways is to locate where the heating pipes run inside a building's walls. If you place the water bowl next to where a heating pipe is located, this will help prevent freezing. One way to find where the pipes are, besides touch, is to see if the cats tend to gather in a particular spot near the wall. If they do, the spot may be warmed by a heating pipe.

Also, contrary to popular belief, hot water freezes faster than cold. The reason is that hot water evaporates faster, leaving less water in the dish, and the lesser amount of water freezes faster than if you had just started out with cold.

One tip for keeping wet food from freezing is to place the bowl inside the cats' insulated shelter. Their body heat will often keep the food from freezing or defrost it enough for them to eat. **But never put water in the cats' shelter.** Cats can get sick in winter from getting wet and then not having any warm, dry place to go.

Thanks to our friends at Neighborhood Cats in New York for the information provided above.

Shelter Insulation

There are many easy ways to make shelters out of Rubbermaid bins, plywood, Styrofoam boxes, and other materials. Providing good insulation and other materials to help make them warmer is important in cold climates.

Straw

It is very important to use straw as insulation, NOT hay. Hay tends to absorb moisture and get moldy more easily. Straw is hollow and repels moisture. Around Halloween there are many places to get straw, even in the city (pumpkin patches, garden centers, etc).

Woodchips

Woodchips work similarly to straw. The city of Chicago will deliver woodchips to you free of charge. This is an environmentally friendly and economical choice. Call 311 for more information.

Mylar Thermal Emergency Blankets

Mylar blankets are made of a thin material that reflects 90% of body heat. It is a good idea to line your shelters with Mylar or even to put a small Mylar blanket at the bottom of the shelter for cats to lie on. You can order them online for a great price at Amazon.com, or they are also available at camping stores.

Styrofoam

Save Styrofoam packing materials and use them to help keep your feral cats warm. In the winter, they can burrow in the packing peanuts (almost as good as straw or woodchips) or you can use the peanuts, coolers, or sheets as a way to insulate the plastic bin shelters.

Polystyrene Foam Insulation Sheets

This insulation is used inside walls to keep homes warm. You can cut it down to size to also insulate your feral cat shelters.

Wool Sweaters or blankets

If the shelters are in a protected place where they will not easily get wet, wool is a great material to use as it is water repellent and absorbs the body heat.