

For Immediate Release:
February 8, 2007

For more information contact:
Tanya Hilgendorf, Executive Director
Humane Society of Huron Valley
734.662.5585 ext. 108
Tanya@hshv.org

Humane Society of Huron Valley: Zero Tolerance for Freezing Pets

The Humane Society of Huron Valley (HSHV) reminds pet owners that plunging winter temperatures can be dangerous for their companion animals. Outside dogs subjected to the severe cold can suffer hypothermia or even death.

Freezing temperatures are dangerous for all pets, but especially for dogs living outside. Even though Michigan state law doesn't prevent dogs from living outside, HSHV strongly recommends that you keep your pets inside in extreme temperatures. Michigan state law does require provisions for adequate shelter and bedding, so owners of outside dogs need to be especially vigilant about providing the following appropriate care.

Dogs living outside require soundly-built, weatherproof doghouses or insulated plastic "igloo" type houses. The doghouse should face south or east, preventing the opening from facing prevailing winds. Ideally, the doghouse should be elevated off the ground. The law requires adequate bedding be placed inside the doghouse when temperatures drop below freezing. HSHV Animal Cruelty Investigators suggest using straw instead of wood shavings or blankets because straw holds a dog's body heat longer and doesn't collect moisture and freeze.

"During the freezing weather months, we'll have no tolerance for dogs found living outside without appropriate shelter and adequate bedding," says Julie Curtis, HSHV Cruelty Investigator. If investigators find a dog living outside with improper housing during the winter months, there's a good chance that the dog may be removed for its own safety.

HSHV Cruelty Investigator Matt Schaecher stated that "all complaints of animals subjected to unsafe conditions will be investigated. Cases found to be valid will be submitted to the Washtenaw County prosecutor's office on charges of animal cruelty." Both Curtis and Schaecher agree that educating the public on animal welfare is their main goal, however, this winter the investigators are calling their plan "zero tolerance."

Animals that are outside during freezing weather need a constant source of fresh water, so check your dog's bowl often to ensure it hasn't frozen. A heavy-duty rubber bowl on a slightly raised surface provides better insulation and will slow the freezing process. Heated water bowls are highly recommended by HSHV.

To report cases of animal cruelty or neglect, call the Humane Society of Huron Valley at (734) 662-5585. If you would like to help the Humane Society of Huron Valley, consider donating your time or money, or adopting a homeless dog or cat. We are also in special need of "igloo" and wooden doghouses for those who cannot afford them to help protect animals left out in the cold.

Visit us on the web at www.hshv.org or at 3100 Cherry Hill, Ann Arbor, MI or call (734) 662-5585. Our shelter is open 7 days a week from noon to 6pm. ***The mission of the Humane Society of Huron Valley is to find loving homes for all adoptable animals in its care and prevent animal cruelty.***

Attached: Winter Pet Safety Tips

#####

Humane Society of Huron Valley
Winter Pet Safety Tips

- During freezing weather, it's best to keep all pets inside, especially at night. If the temperature in the house is comfortable for your family, you can be certain that your pet is safe and warm.
- Be sure to provide adequate shelter, bedding and fresh water for dogs kept outside.
- During winter months outside, dogs' nutritional needs increase. Supplying them with a higher-quality food will help alleviate potential health concerns, such as weight and body heat loss.
- For indoor dogs, take several quick, short walks instead of one long one. Perhaps use a sweater for dogs who are very young, old, small, sick or short-coated.
- Be sure to wipe down your dog's paws each time you return home to remove the chemicals or salt used to melt ice and snow. These can be poisonous if ingested and can irritate sensitive feet.
- Cat owners also need to be careful in winter. Cats are especially susceptible to the cold and don't have the body mass to keep warm in cold temperatures. If at all possible, keep your cat indoors until warmer weather returns. If your cat does go outdoors, make sure it's only for short periods, and ensure your cat is inside overnight.
- Remember to never leave an animal in an unheated car for long periods of time; the temperature inside a car can drop quickly.
- Be sure to knock on the hood of your car each time you start the engine to scare any cats away. Cats often crawl under car hoods to find warmth and can be injured or killed by a starting motor.