

Factsheet 2 : How to keep your dog warm this winter.

We have had our first snow already & Meg is snuggled into her jumper on the sofa!

The cold weather doesn't just affect our skinny whippet friends. Animals with heart / circulatory conditions, the elderly, puppies, ill or arthritic dogs, etc. can all feel the cold & be affected by it.

How to recognise that your companion is cold:-

Curling up in a tight ball to conserve what little heat they have; shivering or teeth chattering; clinging to any available heat source.

The following are suggestions for ways to keep them warm & more comfortable this winter.

TTouch – Earwork is invaluable for cold dogs. Taking the ear between thumb & fingers, gently stroke your fingers down to the tips & off the end of the ear. Keep it rhythmical & regular. Let your dog tell you what feels good. Work on both ears. Try it on yourself to see how effective it is at warming you through.

Clothing: a good dog jumper or coat (without buckles or straps to cause discomfort when sleeping) made of fleece is invaluable. If your dog gets wet, dry them thoroughly & put on a jumper. (<http://www.mekuti.co.uk/hotter.htm>)

Bedding: Draught-proof it. Ensure they can push their backs into something soft & snugly. Line with Vetbed or some other heat retaining fabric (like fleece) to reduce draughts. Heat pads (pet ones) or bubble wrap under the bedding reflects body heat.

Food – warmed if possible. Cold food takes a lot of energy to warm up & may chill the tummy. Regular small meals through the day can help keep blood sugar stable. Consider increasing calories (Meg has porridge with peanut butter, blackstrap molasses & banana for breakfast!)

Exercise – keep out of the water! Keep them moving, but be careful about long walks on cold days. Play games indoors & out that stimulate their circulation & keep their minds working.

Crystallised ginger – when all else has failed with Meg, we give her one piece of crystallised ginger. It warms her right through from the inside & works very quickly.

Feet - check the pads regularly for signs of cracking. Neem oil rubbed into the pads can help enormously (<http://www.mekuti.co.uk/neem.htm>).

Enjoy the cold weather, & keep warm!

DANGER – Anti-freeze is sweet tasting - a teaspoonful is enough to poison a small dog. Keep it safe up high, wiping off any drips, & clear up any spills. Watch for your dogs drinking puddle water in car parks.