



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Kent County Animal Shelter Releases Cold Weather Pet Tips

*Owners Urged to Protect Pets from
Dangerously Cold Temperatures*

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (Dec. 18, 2019) — A newly released video from the Kent County Animal Shelter (KCAS) is now available to pet owners and all county residents about the special care your pet needs during the cold weather. To view the video, click here -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DLv688mXaGg>

While Michigan law *does not* prohibit dogs from being left outside in the cold, state law was recently changed requiring that all dogs who spend long periods of time outside have access to adequate shelter, fresh water and dry bedding. The statute also stipulates separate shelter requirements for livestock.

“We are encouraging all pet owners to take appropriate steps to protect their pets – especially dogs that may be left outside for long stretches of time,” said Dr. Adam London, administrative health officer at the Kent County Health Department. “Dogs, to varying degrees, feel the effects of the cold and inclement weather, so we want to remind pet owners of their responsibilities to care for their pets during the winter.”

A few of the cold weather requirements in State statute include:

1. Maintain adequate shelter, which can be one or more of the following:
 - a. Residence of the dog owner or another individual.
 - b. An enclosed doghouse with a roof that is appropriate for the size and breed of the dog.
 - c. A structure, including a garage, barn or shed, that is sufficiently insulated and ventilated to protect the dog from exposure to extreme temperatures, or if not sufficiently insulated and ventilated, contains a doghouse inside the structure.

2. Provide dry bedding such as straw, hay, etc. when the temperature is or predicated to be below freezing.
3. Provide water that is safe to drink and suitable for the age and species of the animal. Owners are encouraged to check every few hours to ensure the water is not frozen.

The KCAS leadership recognizes some of the terms contained in federal and state animal protection laws are subjective. (i.e. needless suffering) To provide guidance to the animal control officers in addressing the more challenging animal welfare situations, an internal Animal Crimes Workgroup has been formed. This group is comprised of representatives from the Prosecuting Attorney's Office, Sheriff's Office, County Corporate Counsel, and other KCAS staff.

“Animals are among the most vulnerable victims because they obviously cannot speak for themselves,” said Prosecuting Attorney Chris Becker. “By having an assistant prosecutor from my office on this multi-disciplinary workgroup, we will strengthen our ability to identify, address and potentially prosecute cases of animal neglect and abuse.”

The Animal Crimes Workgroup meets once a month, but the team is available at the ready to address urgent situations. Additionally, the workgroup will likely expand to include representatives from other municipalities throughout the county.

“The KCAS encourages pet owners to watch the video to ensure this winter is a safe and happy season for their dogs,” concluded London. “We are available to answer questions, but we are also prepared to respond to calls of animal neglect throughout the winter.”

Residents are encouraged to call the KCAS at (616) 632-7300 if they notice an animal being kept outside for an extended period of time without adequate shelter, water and bedding.

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Resources:

Michigan Public Act 452 of 2018
Michigan Public Act 652 of 2018

KCHD has been in the business of providing health services to Kent County since 1931. The Health Department is home to nearly 265 employees including public health nurses, sanitarians, health educators, technicians, public health administrators, and specialized staff at the Kent County Animal Shelter. The Health Department operates one main clinic and three satellite clinics located in Kentwood, Rockford, and Grand Rapids. To learn more about KCHD services, visit www.accesskent.com/health.