

Use of Chloride-Based Deicers Around Pets

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SUMMARY

Each winter, deicers are used to remove snow and ice around porches, sidewalks, and driveways, and most of these deicers are chloride-based: sodium chloride (also known as rock salt), calcium chloride, magnesium chloride and potassium chloride. Given the number of homes where pets, such as dogs and cats, are present, the potential exists for these valuable members of the family to be exposed to these products.

The risks deicers pose to pets are typically in the form of foot pad or skin contact from walks, and ingestion from eating the deicer. Over-exposure to deicers can potentially negatively impact your pets' health; however, there are a few simple ways to reduce or eliminate these risks. Table 1 includes the "Dos and Don'ts of Using Deicers Around Pets."

Table 1 Dos and Don'ts of using Deicers around Pets

Do:	Don't:
Apply deicing products properly. Follow directions for application and only apply as much as needed.	Let your pet eat deicer on the ground.
Wipe your pet's paws after coming inside.	Let your pet eat snow or ice that may have been treated with a deicer.
Consider the use of paw wax or dog booties, particularly for those pets with sensitive paws.	Walk your pet through areas where deicer was applied and not mechanically removed (shoveled).
Store deicing products out of the reach of pets.	

SKIN AND FOOTPAD CONTACT

Deicers present a low hazard to skin when they are used as directed, as brief contact is essentially nonirritating. Therefore, single short exposures to the solid particles most likely will not cause a problem to the feet of dogs or cats. However, some pets may have more sensitive paws than others; in this case, pet owners may consider the use of a paw wax or dog booties.

Prolonged or repeated contact may cause skin irritation and, in some cases, even a burn. Deicers should be used carefully in areas where animals have routine access, or not at all in areas where prolonged contact could occur, such as in a kennel.

Solid particles may also become lodged between toes or caught in the fur surrounding the footpads, which could prolong contact and increase the potential for irritation. For these reasons, we recommend wiping your pet's paws after coming inside to remove any potentially trapped solid particles.

In the unlikely event that severe irritation is observed, a veterinarian should be consulted.

CONSUMPTION OF DEICERS

Deicers should still be stored out of reach of pets. Pets could ingest deicers when licking their paws after being outside, or by eating snow or ice treated with a deicer. The ingestion of deicers may cause upset stomach, vomiting, or diarrhea. For these reasons, pets should not be allowed to eat the snow and slush that may have been treated with an ice melt, and paws should be wiped clean as soon as they get inside.

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