

Fido Files

Winter Walking with Fido

By Pathways Columnist,
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Have you ever been five minutes into a winter walk with your loyal fur buddy when you notice he stops and lifts a paw - then another? After a few minutes he may just stop and decide it's time to turn around and go home.

Some dog breeds have a naturally long and heat retaining coat, but many other breeds do not have sufficient fat or fur to keep warm

during our cold Calgary winters. Although some people feel it's silly, sometimes it is necessary to get your dog winter wear so that he can enjoy the great outdoors with you comfortably and safely.

Fitting your Dog's Coat and Boots

When shopping for a winter coat, either take your dog with you to the store, or make sure you get his measurements. If you cannot take your pup with you, make sure you pre-measure the length of your dog (from the base of their neck, to the base of their tail) and their girth (this is the area that a harness would circle around behind your dogs front legs) Try to choose a coat that sufficiently covers the chest and the back haunches, and make sure there is room for your dog to move comfortably when active. Finally, ensure the coat allows room for your boy to pee - without getting his coat wet!

Once you find a great coat, it's time to look for a set of boots. The most common complaint that dog owners have when it comes to boots is that they fall off after only a few minutes of activity. All boots will claim to stay on, but all boots are not created equal! It might be a good idea to ask your retailer which boots get the best feedback, or the least complaints! It is best to bring your dog with you to try on boots (so you can tug on them to see if they fall off), but if you cannot, most boots require the measurement of the widest part of your dog's foot (width), and the length of the foot from tip to end - this includes their toe nails. Make sure your dog is standing and flat-footed with his weight on his feet when you take this measurement. When the boots are on, make sure his toes are not pinching at the front of the boot and ensure they have good grip for icy sidewalks. Also, keep your dog's nail trimmed to prevent them from rubbing and wearing their new boots.

A Word on Paw and Coat Care

If your dog walks boot free, keep in mind that sidewalk salt can contribute to drying and cracking of his paws. A great foot balm can help sooth the paws and heal cracked feet - just like hand lotion works for us in the dry winter months. Make sure

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when choosing a balm, you find one that is safe to ingest in case your dog licks his paws. Look for ingredients you can pronounce and understand. They are usually a safer bet!

Finally, increased use of your household furnace during the winter months can also contribute to dryer skin (and more scratching). A good moisturizing shampoo and a high quality essential fatty acid supplement can help sooth and moisturize the skin.

Holly Montgomery - Co-owner and Operator of the Copperfield Tail Blazers.

Low Cost Gifts from the Heart!

Chip in on a group outing: This works well when you can get everyone to agree to forgo the gifts and instead put the money toward a group outing. It can be a nice dinner at a fancy restaurant, a day sledding or a whole weekend away in a rented cabin. Not only does it reduce the focus on material goods, but you also will have time to enjoy each others company.