

Watch out for Fido

By **Lauren Wicks** | Suffolk News-Herald

Published Friday, October 23, 2009

As the season changes, there are the obvious things that need to be taken care of.

Home improvements, thermostat adjustments and other home needs are immediately handled when the weather starts turning cooler.

But there are others in the home that need to have special attention during this time of year as well.

“People need to be aware of the need of your pets, particularly in the winter and very cold and wet periods of time,” said Kay Hurley, director of community outreach for the Suffolk Humane Society. “Nothing would make us happier than for people to treat their pets like members of the family, but we want people to be aware that those pets are completely dependent on them.”

Hurley said there are basic necessities people should remember in colder temperatures, such as remembering to leave adequate food and water as well as shelter, preferably with bedding, for their animals. But, she added, these things alone are not enough for most family pets.

“We unfortunately have a lot of people who keep their pets on chains,” Hurley said. “That’s a pretty miserable existence for them, but in the winter it’s particularly dangerous.”

The Humane Society of the United States has posted a series of tips for pet owners to keep in mind as they prepare for the winter months.

According to the Web site, wind chill can threaten a pet’s life, no matter what the temperature. Even if pets are considered to be “outdoor” pets, they should still be protected by having a dry, draft-free shelter that is large enough to allow the animal to sit and lie down comfortably, but small enough to hold in his body heat. It is also recommended that the floor of the shelter be raised a few inches off the ground and covered with cedar shavings or straw. Additionally, the house should be turned to face away from the wind, and the doorway should be covered with waterproof burlap or heavy plastic.

Aside from protection from the outdoors, the Humane Society also warned of storing antifreeze away from where pets can reach it, wiping salt and ice-melting chemicals from animals’ paws and keeping food and water plentiful.

Hurley said it is easy to forget to provide for the animals of the home in a tough economy like the

country is currently facing, but these small measures are of the utmost importance.

“You need to remember to look out for your best friends,” Hurley said.

For a complete list of tips from the Humane Society of the United States, visit http://www.hsus.org/pets/pet_care/protect_your_pet_from_winters_woes.html.