**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Chicago’s extreme cold means danger for pets**

Veterinarians at Chicago Veterinary Emergency & Specialty Center remind pet owners to keep pets safe in the extreme cold.

Chicago, Ill., January 6, 2015…Chicago’s extreme cold means danger for people and their pets. Veterinarians at Chicago Veterinary Emergency & Specialty Center want to remind pet owners that Chicago’s sub-freezing temperatures can result in serious problems for pets.

Pet owners should be aware of the following dangers:

**Frostbite:** Tails, ears and toe tips are especially susceptible to frostbite when pets are left outdoors for an extended period during sub-freezing temperatures. In extreme temperatures, frostbite can occur in just minutes. Pet owners should contact their veterinarian or Chicago Veterinary Emergency & Specialty Center immediately if they observe the following signs of frostbite:

* Very pale, white skin or bright red skin
* Swollen, painful skin
* Peeling skin

**Hypothermia:** Animals may also suffer from hypothermia, a lowering of the body temperature. Severe hypothermia can lead to serious health problems and even death. Signs of hypothermia include:

* Shivering
* Listlessness
* Lack of coordination

**Anti-freeze:** Anti-freeze is extremely poisonous to pets. Pet owners should be sure to keep animals out of the garage and not allow them to drink from puddles or other areas that may contain anti-freeze. Consumption of anti-freeze by pets should be considered a medical emergency.

**Automobiles and animals:** During this cold weather wild animals and cats may seek shelter under the hood of a car or in a wheel-well. Drivers should tap on the hood and honk the horn before starting a car to reduce the risk of problems.

**Ice-melt and salt:** Ice-melt and salt can be troublesome to pets. It can lead to irritation of the paws. If swallowed, it can lead to stomach upset, or in larger quantities, serious health issues. Pet owners should wipe off their pet’s paws with a warm, wet cloth after they have been outdoors. Pets should not be allowed to eat or lick ice-melt.

**Off-leash dangers:** Pets should always be kept on leashes and under control when outside in an unenclosed area. This is especially true during a snow storm or when walking near bodies of water. Pets walking freely can become disoriented in a snowstorm or fall through the ice near water.

**Pets with health problems:** Pets with heart disease or respiratory problems face a greater danger during the extreme cold. Their time outdoors should be limited.

**How to keep pets safe:**

* Limit your pet’s time outside.
* Use coats and booties to protect pets, especially for young, older and health compromised pets.
* Knock on the hood or honk your horn before starting the car.
* Keep your pet on a leash when out for a walk.
* Don’t allow pets near anti-freeze.
* Be especially careful to limit the time outdoors for senior pets and pets with chronic health problems such as heart disease, respiratory issues, cancer, etc.

For a complete list of cold weather dangers for pets, see: <http://www.chicagoveterinaryemergency.com/files/CVESC_Cold_Weather_Back-final.pdf>

**About Chicago Veterinary Emergency and Specialty Center**

**(**[**www.ChicagoPetEmergency.com**](http://www.ChicagoPetEmergency.com)**)**

Chicago’s oldest and largest pet emergency facility, the Chicago Veterinary Emergency & Specialty Center provides advanced emergency, critical and specialty care for cats and dogs. Each year, the center treats more than 11,000 cats and dogs in its emergency room and thousands more are cared for by veterinary specialists.

Staffed by highly trained specialists and equipped with the latest technology, Chicago Veterinary Emergency & Specialty Center is always open, 24-hours every day of the year. In addition to emergency veterinarians and staff, the facility offers board-certified veterinarians who specialize in cardiology, dentistry, dermatology, diagnostic imaging, internal medicine, neurology, oncology, ophthalmology and surgery. This state-of-the-art facility includes ultrasound and MRI equipment, specialized surgical suites, a blood bank, specialized oxygen cages, heart monitors and more. A cancer and rehabilitation center is located across the street. Chicago Veterinary Emergency & Specialty Center has been providing emergency care for cats and dogs since 1978.

**Media Availability**

Veterinary doctors at Chicago Veterinary Emergency & Specialty Center are available for interview and comment. Arrangements can be made for video to be shot at Chicago Emergency & Specialty Center facilities.

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