

Are dogs really happy in freezing weather?

Written by By Sam Mazzota King Syndicate
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DEAR PAW'S CORNER: While walking along the local riverway this frosty weekend, I noticed at least three people whose dogs were under-equipped for the cold. One dog wore an insulated vest but no booties; the other two dogs wore no cold protection at all. Why do so many owners ignore their dogs' comfort and safety this way? — Harold in New Hampshire

DEAR HAROLD: Unfortunately, not every dog owner knows that it's up to them to protect their pets from cold-weather hazards. Most dogs won't ask for a sweater vest, and I've yet to meet one that didn't hate booties. I know quite a few dogs that just won't tolerate booties.

Many owners do know their dogs' limits in the cold, however. They check the temperature before going outside and survey the sidewalk or trail they're on for hazards like ice chunks, salt or glazing.

They limit the time spent outdoors so their dog's core temperature doesn't drop. They monitor their dogs to make sure they're not shivering or in pain, and that their paws aren't getting frostbitten. And they carefully wipe and check their dogs' paws as soon as they get back indoors.

How do you, an observer, make sure that an owner is following these guidelines? Confronting owners is not advisable. You may be able to strike up a casual conversation on the path, and

ask how their dog tolerates the cold weather. But don't preach at them.

In my experience, owners who take the time to walk their dogs on a leash in freezing weather do care about their health and keep an eye on them in the cold.

Send your tips, comments or questions to ask@pawscorner.com.

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