

Winter Water Tips

In regions with cold climates, a common problem for caretakers is preventing water from freezing during the winter. The cats need water on a regular, daily basis. This need is increased when dry food is used as the staple diet, something that may become necessary when the moisture in canned food causes it to quickly freeze and become inedible.

Here are some suggestions for locations where there is no electricity for heated bowls.

Solar Sipper

The Solar Sipper has a specially designed top with a 4 inch opening that uses the sun to keep water from freezing down to 20 degrees Fahrenheit. In warmer weather, its insulating properties help keep water cool. It holds one quart of water, is manufactured by the Happy Bird Corporation.

Snuggle Safe Microwave Heat Pads

These plastic discs, about the size of a frisbee, can be heated up in a microwave and then placed underneath a water (or food) bowl to prevent freezing for approximately two to three hours in frigid temperatures. If you buy two, you can bring a fresh one with you to the colony and swap it for the one you put out on your last trip. This product can also be wrapped in cloth and slipped inside the cats' shelter for added warmth. Online distributors include [Entirely Pets](#) and the [Snuggle Safe](#) company itself, which is based in the United Kingdom.

Bowl Type

The type of bowl you use can make a big difference in the speed at which water freezes. Containers with thick plastic walls, like Tupperware, are better than thin-walled bowls. Deeper bowls with narrower openings will delay freezing more than containers that are shallow and have relatively wide openings. Dark-colored bowls will absorb more heat from the sun than lighter ones. It also helps to position the bowl so it is out of the wind, but exposed to sunlight.

A small Styrofoam shipping container (approximately 8 inches square and 4 inches deep) can be turned into a well insulated water bowl that will slow freezing. Line the inside of the container with a thick plastic bag, then cut a hole in the top large enough for a cat to drink from. Fill with water. Vaccines are often shipped in this size Styrofoam container, so ask your veterinarian if she can save one for you.

Tires and rocks

Here's an old trick used by horse owners to keep buckets of water out in the pasture from freezing. Take an old black tire (that's off its rim) and fill it with rocks. Then tightly wedge a large bucket in the tire's hole and fill with water. During the day, the tire absorbs sunlight and heats the rocks stuffed inside. The rocks in turn radiate heat and keep the water from freezing.

Wet food trick

Do your cats come running over as soon as you show up to feed? Take advantage by giving them some wet food right away with extra water mixed in. Cats don't usually need much water, so this could be a big help if it's otherwise difficult to keep water available.

Other tips:

- Warm canned food and water before serving
- Spray insulation foam into the underside of plastic feeding dishes or cut foam insulation to fit around bowls
- Add a pinch of sugar to the water to keep it from freezing as quickly
- Place disposable hand warmers under canned food or water bowls
- AVOID USING METAL BOWLS. You don't want your cat's tongue to freeze to the bowl.