



"Critter Winterization"

Winterization is not only a term used for you vehicle or your home, it is also a term used to help the survival of domestic and wild animals.

Keeping birdfeeders adequately filled throughout the year basically trains birds and squirrels to depend on the food source which you provide for them. I have always made sure that the outside critters are always kept well supplied in seed and corn, mainly because I enjoy watching them sitting on their perches nibbling away. Little did I know that this could make the outside critters dependant on this food source. I was not aware that birds, squirrels, and chipmunks could actually starve to death if I was negligent in filling their feeders. After much reading and research, I discovered that, especially during the winter, the critters become so dependant on

what I provide for them, that they wait patiently watching from within shrubs and trees for me to replenish their food. During the time they are waiting, if too many days pass, they can actually starve to death.

With the cold weather upon us, *eight degrees this morning*, I decided to make sure that several feeders are hung and replenished each day. It is also important that your landscape have small, evergreen bushes as a protecting hideaway from snow and cold rain that occurs during this time. Squirrels live in the trees, usually in the large nests that you can observe from down below. Ground Squirrels, rabbits, chipmunks and small birds often live near or in the ground. When property is excavated for the sole purpose of building a home, small bushes and other underbrush are usually the first to go, then the trees. If you are wanting to view wildlife, *which is a special treat for those of us who live in the mountains*, then this needs to be taken into consideration when clearing property for the building of a new home.

Domesticated animals, such as outside dogs or cats, need to have a warm place to hide from the elements. If it's a doghouse, under-porch, barn, or garage that the animals use as an outside home, make sure that they are able to be well away from the opening in which they enter, otherwise install a "doggie-door". Always make sure that they have a fresh water supply, one that is kept from freezing. Keeping the water dish away from the entrance will help with this. Always make sure that warm bedding is provided. If you have "mouser-cats" that live outside year round, make sure that if you are gone for any amount of time that a friend stops by to check on them and replenish their food and water.

-Cleaning your pet's paws, when they come inside, should be done not only to prevent muddy prints on your carpet, but also serves as a good preventive measure from the possible ingestion of salt used for ice melting, and antifreeze that may have leaked from your vehicle; it only takes a small amount of

ingested antifreeze to poison an animal. *One thing is for sure, when your pet comes inside, the first thing they do is lie in their favorite spot, and lick their paws.*

-Before starting your vehicle, bang on the hood and the sides to scare out a cat, raccoon, or another critter that may have crawled in to feel the warmth of your engine. Numerous fatalities and injuries to animals happen each year when this happens.

-During snowy times, a dog that has wandered away from your home may have difficulty finding its way back. Dogs depend on their sense of smell to find their way back home.

-If you have an outside animal, make sure that they always have a tag on their collar. That way, in the event the animal becomes lost or injured it will be easier to help in the search for their home when someone finds them.

Whether it be a wild critter out your window that has become dependant on the feed you supply them, or a domestic pet that keeps your feet warm at night and you let outside during the day, or an

outside dog or cat, remember to help in the winterizing of them.

