



## Preventing Water From Freezing

In many regions during wintertime, a common problem for caretakers is keeping the cats' water from freezing. The cats need water, especially when dry food is the predominant food provided, which is often the case in winter when wet food itself can quickly freeze. Below is a list of different solutions - which one is best for you will depend on your own situation.

- The ideal solution, though only plausible in secure circumstances, is an **electrically heated water bowl**. The water will evaporate relatively quickly, so the bowl needs to be filled with a gallon of water in order to last 24 hours. The bowl also can be used for wet food, though it will quickly dry the food up.



A 5 quart dish with 6 foot protected cord is available from [KV Vet Supply](#) in plastic for \$23.70 (item no. 84080) or stainless steel for \$43.65 (item no. 84081). You can also order by phone at 1-800-423-8211.

- The **Pet Solar Sipper** (Model No. 10011) from the Happy Bird Corporation uses solar energy to keep water from freezing and works at 18 degrees F. and above. Available for \$29.95 plus \$10.00 shipping & handling. To order, [click here](#). Also take a look at their [cordless immersion heaters](#) which run on D batteries.



- **SnuggleSafe Microwave Heat Pad** is a disk about the size of a frisbee intended to keep a pet's bedding warm. Under normal indoor conditions, you put it in the microwave for 5 minutes and it stays hot for 12 hours. For outdoor use, it has been reported that the discs can be safely heated up to 8 minutes in a 1,000 watt microwave in order for their heating effect to last as long as possible outdoors. Be careful however, because depending on the microwave, the discs can conceivably melt so you have to do a little trial and error to see how long you can "cook" them.



The discs can be placed under a water bowl (or a large dinner plate to keep food from freezing). In frigid temperatures, their heat lasts two to three hours. If you can afford it, it's convenient to have two discs - that way you can heat and bring one to the colony, and pickup and bring back the other which was used the last time you fed.

SnuggleSafe is also great (wrapped in cloth the cats can't open) for providing warmth inside their shelters. Available from [Entirely Pets](#) (\$26.99) among other distributors, including the [SnuggleSafe company](#) itself, which is based in England.



- **Place the water bowl inside a styrofoam cooler** - one of the cheap white ones used for soda and the like. Cut a hole for the cats to enter on one end of the cooler and put the bowl at the other end. The styrofoam's insulation will slow down the freezing process.
- **The type of bowl** you use in general can make a difference. Use one made of thick plastic, like a Tupperware container - it's amazing how long it takes for water to freeze in one of them. The best bowls are deep, insulated and have relatively small openings compared to their volume. Black or dark colored bowls will absorb solar radiation better. Position the bowl so it's protected from the wind and, if possible, exposed to the sun.
- **If the cats come to eat right away while you're there, put a little extra water in their wet food.** Also, you can put some in the dry food if you know they'll eat it soon.
- *(From Susanne Mahar of Noah's Kingdom Humane Society in Albany)* - Get a **small styrofoam container like the ones used to ship vaccines** (approximately 8 inches square and 4 inches deep). Cut a hole in the top large enough for a cat to drink through, then line the inside of the container with a plastic bag and fill it with water.
- **Get an old tire (off its rim) and stuff it with rocks.** Wedge a large bucket or similar-sized container in the hole in the tire and pour the water into the bucket. The black tire will absorb the light from the sun during the day and heat the rocks stuffed inside the tire and the rocks will radiate enough warmth to keep the water from freezing. This is a trick invented by horse owners trying to keep water out in their fields from freezing.
- **Place the water bowl near where heating pipes are located inside a wall.** This is a good idea if you're placing the bowl in an alleyway between buildings. Placing the water bowl next to where a heating pipe is located will help slow freezing. One way to find where the pipes are, besides touch, is to see if the cats tend to gather in a particular spot near the wall. If they do, the spot may be warmed by a heating pipe.
- **Add sugar or salt to the cats' drinking water.** Salt is a little more effective, sugar is a little more palatable but both will lower the water's freezing point giving the cats more time to drink. You can experiment to see what amount is best for the size and type of bowl you're using. For starters, with an average-sized bowl (approximately 1 qt.) try stirring in 1/2 - 1 level tsp.