

Northwoods Humane Society – Deanna Persson President

It is that time of year when the lakes are beginning to freeze. Lakes in the process of freezing are a risk for our pets and for wildlife. There are two rescue stories that have stayed with me over the years. One involved Jon LeBlance who rescued a dog on his lake – it was a neighbor’s dog and the other rescue was done by Chris Headly many years ago.

Our instinct seems to activate the moment we sense our dogs in any danger. We rush in to stop them from eating anything toxic or getting into an accident. However, when it comes to your falling into icy waters, jumping in after them should never be your first course of action. The following is taken from Dogtime.com.

“It may be hard to resist those protective instincts, but you will put your dog and yourself, as well as anyone else who tries to help you, in even more danger if you jump in after them.

Here’s why you should never go into icy waters after your dog and what you should do, instead. When you go into the water after your dog, you’re putting your own life at risk. That may be acceptable to you to save your dog, but you’re actually putting your dog in more danger, too. You’re also endangering the lives of rescuers.

Think about it: if you get stuck in the water, the rescuers will have to work harder to save both you and your dog. They’ll also save you first — that’s just the way it goes — which means it will take that much longer for them to get to your dog. And those precious moments could make the difference between life and death.

Even if you do manage to get your dog out of the water and get stuck, yourself, who will be there to stop your dog from falling in again? Or from running off, getting lost, and suffering from hypothermia?

Sometimes accidents happen, even if you do your best to take precautions. If your dog falls into icy water, try to remain calm and do NOT jump in after them.

Follow these steps, instead:

- **Call 911:** The fire department has flotation devices and equipment to save your dog. They are trained and prepared. You are not. They also have blankets and emergency supplies to provide your dog with any care they may need after getting out of the water.
- **Find something to throw or reach:** Dogs are usually good enough at holding the edge of the ice to prevent themselves from going under the water completely. They may struggle, but they should be able to hold on until rescuers arrive. In the meantime, you can help by grabbing some kind of flotation device to throw, preferably one with a rope. This can help your dog stay afloat, especially if the ice wall is too high for them to hold on. If you can’t find a flotation device, you can look for a branch, ladder, or long pole to try to reach your dog. Anything they can grab onto will better their chances of survival.
- **Avoid making them swim:** It may be tempting to call to your dog to try to guide them to a shallower area or a place where they can hold on more easily, but swimming will cause them to lose body heat faster. It’s best if your dog stays as still as possible, so avoid exciting them if they already have a good hold on the ice. Just wait until rescuers arrive.

- **Hold back and follow directions:** Again, do NOT go in after your dog or rescuers may have to risk their lives to save you, as well as your dog. Follow their instructions. Let them get your dog to safety before you rush in to help. They'll take measures to prevent hypothermia and frostbite in your dog and tell you what you need to do.
- **Follow-up care:** You'll likely need to head to an emergency vet if your dog's condition is dangerous. Regardless, you should follow up with your regular vet. Dogs who suffer hypothermia or frostbite are prone to developing those conditions again. Talk to your vet about what care you need to provide and what preventative measures you need to take.

**Here's what to do if your dog has hypothermia:**

1. Get your dog into a warm building or vehicle.
2. Wrap them in blankets, towels, coats, etc. If you can, warm up some blankets on a radiator, in a clothes dryer, or using a hairdryer.
3. Place bottles of warm water next to your dog, but always keep a couple layers of fabric between the bottle and your dog's skin.
4. Get to the nearest veterinary office immediately.

**Holiday Matching Gift update!** Thank you to those that are supporting our goal to raise \$25,000 to Match the dollar-for-dollar gift. We are on our way but not there yet. Gifts may be mailed to the Northwoods Humane Society – P. O. Box 82 – Hayward, WI 54843 or given on our website – <https://www.northwoodshumanesociety.org/events--fundraisers.html> or taken to the NHS Shelter or NHS Thrift Shop.