

SURVIVING A NEW YORK WINTER WITH YOUR DOG TIPS FROM ROCK & RAWHIDE

BY SEAN-PATRICK M. HILLMAN

Even when the end is in sight and we've had a few teaser days to enjoy, there no argument that winter is always a difficult time for city-dwellers: We're stuck inside, trying to clean that rancid salt and dirt from the black snow off of our shoes and boots much less Fido's paws! And yes, we're also making a conscientious effort to keep Fido calm, healthy and fit when it is cold and wet outside, sadly a weather condition that carries on well into Spring. These are all norms in the Big Apple. And 2020 is forecast as one of the coldest and wettest on record in the tri-state area...at least that's what people "in the know" are saying.

As a third-generation Manhattan-born and bred in the 70's and 80's, I have lived through blizzards, bombogenesis, hurricanes, SuperStorms, blackouts and more in this town. Each presented its challenges when it came to caring for my dogs. To help you get through what is supposedly a tough winter (has the weatherperson ever been held accountable for a bad forecast?!), I have compiled some tips and tricks from two of the leaders of Rock & Rawhide's Pack...our Board Advisor & Trainer, Kate Perry Dog Training, as well as our veterinarian, Dr. Stephanie Liff at Pure Paws of Hell's Kitchen on West 42nd Street.

Here are some of Kate's best fun, innovative indoor tricks and games for when it's too cold to walk outside and to prevent your dogs from going stir crazy:



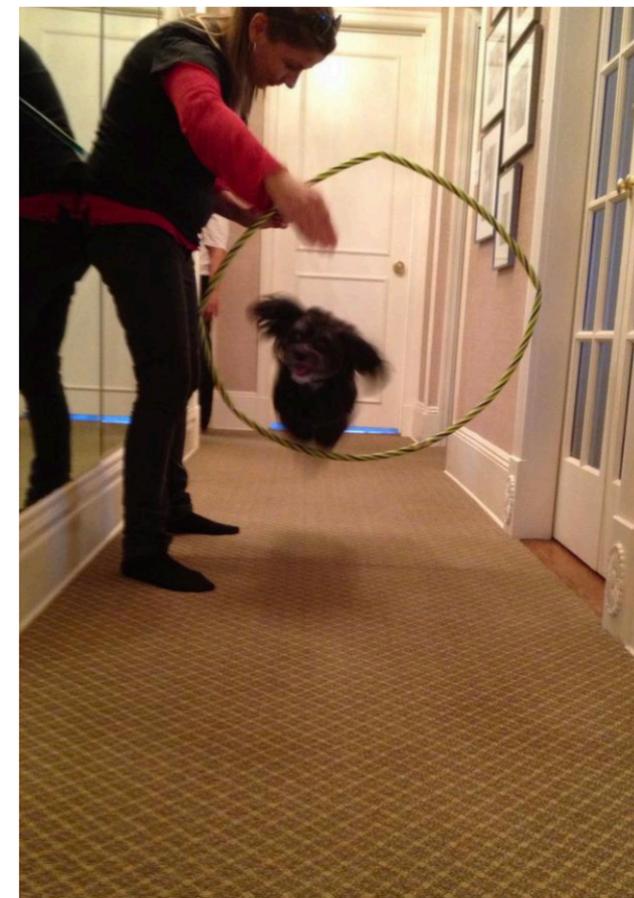
- Turn your hallways into a mini agility course for dogs: Teach your pooch to jump through hula hoops on a yoga mat or carpet for soft landings. This is a great way to exercise your pooch and have fun.
- Teach your pooch to run through 6-8 foot tunnels. These tunnels, made of fabric, are pretty inexpensive and can be bought at most pet specialty stores.
- For the more athletic pooches and owners: Do stairmaster exercises in your stairwell.
 - Use the fire exit stairs to run up and down with your pooch. Great exercise for you and your dog :)
 - OR have 2 people standing on separate landings and work on your RECALL/ COME command.
- For the older more lazy pooch. Use a yoga mat to teach lie down and rollover trick or army crawl.
- One of Kate's favorites is to teach dogs to spin on a towel after coming in from wet snowy days. It's not only fun but is also very practical to wipe their feet off without you having to do it. (And especially for those dogs that don't like their paws being touched.) You can then combine both a spin and rollover trick on the towel. And voila...Your dog has dried itself off on the towel. And this trick is featured in my book!!!
- And if you don't have time to partake in games with your Pooch, then use puzzle games. Nina Ottosson creates wonderful board and puzzle games for high IQ pooches to work to get their food. ("Outward Hound Dog Brick, Dog Tornado" game and many more). Kate also likes the Busy Buddy Twist and Treat by Pet Safe company. You can fill them with yummy treats. Then place and/or hide them in different parts of the apartment and tell your dog to GO FIND IT to find the puzzle game. After they run off in search of toy, they then have to work on getting food out. This meets the dog's natural instincts to want to forage and search for their food. Great mental stimulation too!!



To learn more about Kate Perry, please visit kateperrydogtraining.com. Or, if you would like to learn more tips and tricks right away, you can buy Kate's award-winning book, available on Amazon, "Training For Both Ends Of The Leash" which is a REALLY easy read and a lot of fun.

Often during the winter months, you run into health or wellness issues with your dog because they can't exercise as much, or they don't want to be outside in the freezing cold for more than a few minutes at a time. Dr. Stephanie Liff's tips for a healthier pooch during the winter months include:

- Make sure that your building is using pet-friendly snow melt or salt – if they aren't, or you walk your dog around the city streets, you should consider a barrier for their paws, like pet boots (i.e. - PAWZ) or wax (i.e. - Mixlab, Musers, etc.).
- You have to be careful about walking through puddles, curb "ponds" and snowbanks because of potential dangers hidden underneath, especially when it comes to the temperature of the water because it can hurt their paws.
- If it's cold for you, it is cold for your pet. If it's really cold, you need to make sure they have a coat or some kind of insulated barrier like a fleece or heavy sweater.
- If their activity level is less because of weather, you should monitor calorie intake just like humans. You may want to consider feeding them a little less food or cutting back on treats so that they can maintain that "summer bod."
- If it's a dry season, use fish oil in their food and consider extra bathing with a conditioner. You need to make sure to keep their coat shiny. Along those lines, also monitor nail length as you may need to get them trimmed more often.
- If your schedule changes because of the weather or time change, you need to still make sure their medication, training, feeding and sleeping schedule remains the same. Dogs rely on structure and schedule for mental well-being.



To learn more about Dr. Liff, please visit purepawsvet.com. Dr. Liff sits on the board of one of Rock & Rawhide's rescue partners, Muddy Paws Rescue (muddypawsrescue.org) and is considered to be one of the best veterinarians in the city.

New York is hard enough on our pets, no matter what the season, but hopefully these tips will help you make it through the colder months of the year. As a rule of paw, always remember that if it is too cold for you, regardless of their fur coat, it is likely too cold for them to be outside for long periods of time.

Stay Pawesome and warm this winter!!! •

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sean-Patrick M. Hillman is the Chairman & Co-Founder of Rock & Rawhide, a 501(c)3 non-profit whose mission is to increase the level of adoptions of dogs and cats at shelters and rescues.