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Briard



Briefs

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YOUR BRIARD AND WINTER WEATHER: There are few people with enough Briards to have a regulation kennel. Most Briards are the constant companions of their owners and live in the house aside from short sojourns outdoors. It is somewhat ironic that the owners of such dogs often express pity for the "poor kennel dog" who cannot spend most of his time cosily curled up near a radiator. Their pity, while unquestionably meant well, is not sound.

Even an unheated kennel is a suitable place for a Briard no matter what the weather, provided he is given a sleeping platform where he can curl up out of the draft and where he will not have to lie in the puddle formed by melting ice, snow and rain that have soaked him during the time he scampers about in his run. Kindly nature has arranged it so that his heavy undercoat plus the long and permanent outer coat provide perfect insulation.

The writer has seen enough of Briards to know when they are happy. Our Briards come dashing into their house for feeding on a winter day when rain or melted snow has turned to ice as it has reached the belly hairs and, underneath, they look like a crystal chandelier. They even tinkle as they run!

Tails are waving and happy barks greet the poor human who struggles through the drifts all bundled up in heavy clothes. If these dogs are unhappy, dejected, miserable, they certainly give no indication of it. Otherwise you must believe that Briards are dumb when you watch them leave the relatively snug shelter of the kennel building to go out again into zero weather. No animal can be that stupid,

But let us turn to the house dog. All night he has slept in a warm room. More often than not he has crawled on the bed with master or mistress. When morning comes he wants out for obvious reasons. So you, good kind master, open the back door a crack, shudder at the icy blast that enters and turn your overheated pal into weather that must enter his lungs like the stab of a knife. In a few minutes he is back again, only to repeat the performance several times a day.

There is no intent in this item to solve the problem as the only solution would be to either keep him outdoors all the time or else housed like a tabby cat on her silken pillow. But there is a compromise of sorts. When he does go out in the cold weather see that he keeps moving even if you -- shudder, shudder -- have to go out with him. If he is wet when he returns give him a quick rub down with a rough towel and let him have a drink of water that is at least at room temperature. Do not let him stay out any longer than is necessary.

Some owners of short-haired dogs try to avoid the problem by having a blanket for the dog when it is out. Not being a veterinarian we do not have the answer but something tells us that the blanket idea for a temporary jaunt into the chilly weather is about as useless as a diamond-studded collar. True enough that dog can be thoroughly chilled in its body if it stays out too long in bitter weather but bodily comfort is not the only thing. A dog that is cold will come back to the fireside as soon as possible but what about the gusts of frosty air he must breathe in spite of blankets and even cute little booties to prevent the nasty snow from getting between his toes.

Briards may be better equipped than some breeds for such conditions. Experts tell us that air is warmed as it passes down into the lungs. The longer the passage, the more chance there is of its reaching the lungs at something above zero. Pity the snub-nosed dogs with the snort passages between winter's blasts and hot lungs. Is it any wonder that owners of the bashed-in nose breeds complain that respiratory ills are common.

Figure it out this way. Your house Briard wears the same clothing for the fireplace as he does for the out-of-doors. He cannot pull on more clothes when he goes out. He cannot even follow your habit of wrapping a muffler around your nose and mouth to take some of the sting out of the air until your innards prepare themselves for the change in temperature.

Men working under compressed air pass through a chamber where their bodies become gradually accustomed to the changes in pressure. Perhaps it would be a fine thing if our homes were equipped with a series of rooms ranging from room temperatures down to outdoor readings. We could then let our dogs pass through the various stages on their way out. Lacking any such complicated arrangement, we must do the best we can but do keep it in mind. Briards do get pneumonia just like most animals -- including we humans.

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