



ALISON DIXON MULLANE

In Point Pleasant Park, Charlie and Leonard can run around on the snow-covered grass with their owner Joan Sinden and not worry about salt irritating their paws.

# Salty sidewalks hurt pooches

*Throwing salt on sidewalks helps remove snow and ice, but it doesn't make the way easy for dogs.*

By Ruth Petrykanyn  
**The Commoner**

As Charlie and Leonard run through Point Pleasant Park with their tails wagging, it's clear that these two Labrador retriever/sheltie mixes enjoy their time outside. Joan Sinden, Charlie and Leonard's owner, says she brings them here in the winter so they can frolic in a salt-free environment. The salt on sidewalks around their regular route irritates their tiny paws.

Sinden lives in an apartment near the Halifax Commons. Charlie and Leonard wait patiently every day for Sinden to return from work in the late afternoon for their daily walk. The salt has made walks difficult for both the dogs and Sinden.

"If they get salt in their paws, they will stop walking and gnaw at them," says Sinden, "which makes for a very long walk.

You can't carry two dogs totalling 170 pounds."

Sinden says she doesn't mind that the usual exercise route is altered. She says Charlie and Leonard are happy running around on the snow-covered grass in the park.

"I love my dogs and I get very concerned that the salt is going to burn the pads in their paws," she says. "They need to get out and run around because I live in an apartment, so the winter makes it difficult for them."

Dr. Jack Cameron of the Dartmouth Veterinary Hospital says that Charlie and Leonard's paws, like the paws of many other dogs become irritated because the salt sticks in between the pads and the toes of the paws. However, not all salt does it, says Cameron. There are kinds out there that are pet-friendly.

Another side effect, he says, is that some of the dogs who develop an irritation in their paws will tend to lick at the sores, subsequently ingesting the salt, which can make them sick to their stomach.

Dr. Cameron recommends that if a dog's paws become irritated, they should stay off the roads and sidewalks and be taken to a park or let out in the backyard. For those who still walk on the roads and sidewalks, Dr. Cameron says there are many store-bought items that can reduce irritation.

At Best Friends Pet Supplies in Clayton Park, paw protectors are hot items this year. Shelley White, an employee, says there are two main items that are best sellers. The most popular is a lickable paw cream called Invisible Boot, made of beeswax and plant extracts. The cream, which sells for \$12.49, forms a protective layer over the paws, which prevents the salt and ice from sticking.

For an even more protective layer, dog owners can try Artic Fleece boots, which are like little galoshes for dog's paws that keep any substance from penetrating the lining. The boots sell for \$12.99, but are only good for dogs that aren't bothered by them.

White says that now, more than ever, people are buying these items for their dogs.

The store is having a hard time keeping up with the demand.

"There have been so many people looking for things for their dogs paws," she says. "It's unbelievable. The stuff is flying off the shelves."

For an owner that doesn't want to spend too much, White says you can put Vaseline, which sells at any drug store for around two dollars, all over a dog's paw. That will help keep ice and salt from sticking to the pad.

"Anything that will keep them from licking and biting their paws will work," she says.

As Sinden tries to keep up with Charlie and Leonard as they bound through the trees and across the snow, she says she doesn't buy any of the creams or boots for Charlie or Leonard.

"I think they're great for dogs, but Charlie and Leonard won't let me touch their paws, so I never have been able to try them," she laughs.

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