

Hounds for the Holidays!

Holiday times can be joyful or a source of stress for all of us, and that goes for your dogs, too! With some advanced planning and a little training, you can make things more festive and fun for Fido and less stressful for you!



Things to Keep in Mind Throughout the Holiday Seasons:

- Dogs can be very sensitive to changes in their environment and routines. When family members take time off from work and school, house guests come to stay, or other visitors roll through the home in droves, you need to try to preserve a few of your dog's routines, such as regular meal schedules and walks, exercise or play sessions.
- If there's considerably more activity than usual, plan some quiet times for your dog as well.
- The added stress and excitement of holiday festivities can increase your dog's thirst too, so make sure your dog has plenty of fresh water to drink.
- If your dog is the excitable or anxious type, he might benefit from an over-the-counter remedy, such as Rescue Remedy, to help keep him calm down and relax. Ask your veterinarian about his or her recommendations as well as how much you should use and how often.
- Comfort Zone DAP (Dog Appeasing Pheromone) can also help maintain your dog's calm demeanor. DAP mimics the effects of a pheromone emitted by nursing female dogs, thought to calm the puppies. It can be delivered through a wall diffuser (similar to an air-freshener plug-in), a special collar impregnated with the substance, or can be directly sprayed on bedding or a bandana worn by your dog.

Holiday Décor: Dog Safety Issues

Holiday trappings help to maintain the merry mood but can be fraught with dangers for your dog. Here are some things to watch out for:

Christmas Trees

- Tinsel, popcorn strands, and other garland-like decorations can cause serious internal injuries if ingested, and these are just the kinds of things that curious dogs can't resist.
- The ribbons, string, and other wrapping accessories found on gifts can be very problematic as well. These can lead to choking or strangulation for a curious pup.
- Water at the base of natural trees can contain anti-freeze and other preservatives that are deadly to your dog.
- All Christmas trees should be firmly anchored to the wall or ceiling to prevent it from being toppled by an inquisitive pooch.

If you can't avoid all these things, try encircling your Christmas tree and gift display with an exercise pen to keep your dog away but still allowing you to enjoy your holiday cheer.

Electrical Cords

- Make sure these cords are well-secured, so your dog doesn't make a chew toy out of them. Consider using cord containers or running them through PVC to avoid having your dog chew on them when you cannot supervise it.

Snow Globes

- While many are still made of glass, others can be found in chewable plastic with plastic bases. Chewed plastic shards from broken globes can be life-threatening. Many globes also add an anti-freeze-like substance to the water inside to slow the movement of the snow inside, so a double danger!

Scented candles

- Candles can be attractive because of their smell, taste and texture. Make sure they are perched on high shelves out of Rover's reach! Never leave a lit candle unsupervised as they are easily knocked over and quickly become a fire hazard.

Who's at the Door?

No where does the average family dog get into so much trouble as at the front door! Inappropriate greeting behaviors, door-dashing, and just over-the-top excitement can make the front door a source of stress for everyone during the holidays. Here are some ideas for making the doorway a safer place:

Train polite greeting behaviors

- Practice! Heavily reinforce 'sits' and ignore jumping up. Turning your back on a jumper can work very well too. For added control, tether your dog to a heavy stationary object to prevent him from following you or jumping on your back as you turn away. Practice with lots of different people and practice in your doorway area to make sure your dog knows it where he'll need it! You can also teach your dog to wait behind a boundary line away from the door entryway or teach him to go to a particular place, like a dog bed, while guests enter the home.

A safe place

- If you haven't had time to train for all the comings and goings at the door, it's always good practice to have your dog crated, securely fastened on a tether, or on a leash while guests are arriving or departing.

Taming the Mob

Entertaining guests can make the holidays merry, but it's important to remember how visitors can be stressful for our dogs.

Avoid visiting pets

- Unless your dog is already great friends with your visitor's pets, it's a good idea to suggest your guests leave their pets at home. Having multiple animals in the home presents management challenges you may not be prepared to handle amidst all the other distractions you'll be facing.

Keep snacking to a minimum

- Make sure your guests know not to feed your dog from the table. Lots of fatty tidbits handed out by well-meaning visitors can also lead to a dangerous bout of pancreatitis or intestinal upset. If your friends can't help but offer your dog a treat (who can resist!), have a portioned supply of his special treats or even his kibble on hand that guests can use instead.

Clear the area!

- Keep a watchful eye for plates and cocktails left at dog level. Since good intentions are prone to fail with so much going on, consider confining your dog to his crate or another room while your guests are bustling about (make sure he has something wonderful to do while he's there) just to make sure he doesn't get into

trouble.

Dogs and kids don't always mix!

- Holiday gatherings can be very over-stimulating for dogs and kids alike, so never leave the dog alone with any little people, even his own kids. Interactions between the dog and kids should be strictly supervised by an adult who's dog-savvy enough to know when your dog needs a break.
- Finally, if your dog is prone to fearfulness, anxiety or over-excitement when company is around, his crate or private place is best to keep him calm and safe.

Train In Advance!

Great manners are always made, not born, and it can be fun to work with your dog on the life skills he'll need to be the life of the party. Here are a few things you'll want to incorporate into your training plan:

“Sit and wait” or “down and wait”

- Great skills for your dog to learn! Taught positively, these exercises help your dog relax and enjoy his calm and relaxed participation in a family gathering. They can also prevent unruly door greetings and eliminate door-dashing.

“Place” or “go to bed”

- This cue basically involves teaching the dog to proceed to a specified place and wait there for further instructions. Use this one to keep him away from the food table during meal times, which prevents begging and discourages guests from passing your pooch tidbits under the table.

“Leave it”

- An invaluable tool for any dog owner and can help head off a dog who's aiming for a gift basket, dropped food item, or just about anything else. Trained positively, your dog will gladly disengage from just about anything you've assigned a “leave it” to.

“Drop it”

- A suitable companion to “leave it,” “drop it” can be used to ask your dog to relinquish an already acquired item. This can be trained through a series of fun trading games that will teach your dog to happily spit things out in anticipation of something better!

Counter-surfing counter-measures

- Already confirmed counter-surfers should be confined away from the action, since the high temptation, high distraction environment of a holiday party will be more than they can bear! But if your dog still hasn't scored off the counter yet, using “leave it” training will go a long way to helping your dog understand that counter-surfing doesn't pay!

Bring on the noise!

- Many holiday celebrations include noisy displays such as fireworks that can drive your dog batty. Start preparing in advance by playing fireworks sound effect recordings on your home stereo. Start the volume at a very low, almost imperceptible level until you're sure that your dog is comfortable; then crank up the volume half a click. Continue progressing at that rate until bombs bursting in air are no big deal for your dog. If you have a dog who's already acutely sound-sensitive, find a good trainer or behavior consultant with experience in this area to help you get ready.

Resources

- DAP with Comfort Zone at www.petcomfortzone.com
- Rescue Remedy at www.bachflower.com
- ASPCA Animal Control Poison Center 1-888-4-ANI-HELP or www.asPCA.org/pet-care/poison-control
- Premier's Manners Minder at www.premier.com

Fourth of July

Families across America love to celebrate with fireworks. For many dogs however, fireworks can be a source of extreme fear and stress. Here are some tips to help with the stress:

- Take your dog for a long walk before the festivities start. This will allow him to potty outside before all of the noise begins and the exercise may help tire him out.
- During firework displays, keep your dog indoors in a confined and secure area with shades closed. You might also try adding some white noise with an oscillating fan.
- Turn on your television or radio with the volume up a bit for an added distraction.
- If your dog does become stressed, try to make the fireworks a cue for fun time to begin. Play a fun game with him and act a bit silly. Your fun behavior and body language can help distract him from the noise outside.
- You can try a pheromone product like Comfort Zone with D.A.P. which can help relax your dog. Plan on exposing your dog to the pheromones at least a couple of weeks ahead of time.
- It's not recommended that you take your dog to a fireworks display. However, if you do, keep him on a leash and check his collar to make sure that it's properly fit so he won't slip out of it.
- Make sure your dog's collar has current identification tags on it, in case he does escape. For extra safety, make sure your pet is microchipped. July 5th is one of the busiest days of the year for local animal shelters. Dogs end up miles from home, confused, disorientated and exhausted. Having an ID tag and microchip can help expedite your reunion.
- If your dog is extremely sensitive, consider consulting your veterinarian for a mild sedative or tranquilizer to help keep your dog calm. There are also herbal remedies that are available which can sometimes help. Speak with your veterinarian about your options.



By using these recommendations you can help make the holiday enjoyable for everyone.

Resources

- DAP with Comfort Zone at www.petcomfortzone.com
- Rescue Remedy at www.bachflower.com
- Premier Calming Cap at www.premier.com

**For more information on the Association of Pet Dog Trainers,
visit our Web site at www.apdt.com or call 1-800-PET-DOGS (738-3647) or email information@apdt.com.**