

FOUR LEGS IN THE FIRELANDS



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HOLIDAY PET CARE

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Now that the holiday season is upon us, we can enjoy the time we spend with family and friends and so can our pets.

Our four-legged family members love the holidays but sometimes can become upset by the changing routine. To help them stay as comfortable and healthy as possible, be sure you plan for their needs as well as your guests.

Visitors can upset pets, as can the noise and excitement of holiday parties. Even pets that aren't normally shy may become nervous in the unfamiliar setting that can accompany a holiday gathering. The following tips will reduce emotional stress on your pet and protect your guests from possible injury.

HOSTING PARTIES AND VISITORS

- All pets should have access to a comfortable, quiet place inside if they want to retreat. Make sure your pet has a room or crate somewhere away from the commotion — where your guests won't follow — to go to anytime they want to get away.
- Inform your guests ahead of time that you have pets or if other guests may be bringing pets to your house. Guests with allergies or compromised immune systems (due to pregnancy, disease, or medications/treatments that suppress the immune system) need to be aware of the pets in your home so they can take any needed precautions to protect themselves.
- Pets that are nervous around visitors should be put in another room or a crate with a favorite toy. If your pet is particularly upset by houseguests, talk to your veterinarian about possible solutions to this common problem.
- Housewarming gifts such as house plants and candles are beautiful additions to the holiday table but beware of amaryllis, mistletoe, balsam, pine, cedar and holly, which are among the more common holiday plants that can be dangerous and even poisonous to pets who decide to eat them. Poinsettias can be irritating to the mouth and stomach of pets but are not considered life-threatening. Candles are attractive to pets as well as people. Never leave a pet alone in an area with a lit candle.
- Clear the food from your table, counters and serving areas when you are done and make sure the trash gets put where your pet can't reach it. A turkey or chicken carcass or other large quantities of meat sitting out on the carving table, or left in a trash container that is easily opened, could be deadly to your family pet. Dispose of carcasses and bones and anything used to wrap or tie the meat, such as strings, bags and packaging, in a covered, tightly secured trash bag placed in a closed trash container outdoors (or behind a closed, locked door).

- Trash also should be cleared away where pets can't reach it, especially sparkly ribbon and other packaging or decorative items that could be tempting for your pet to play with or consume.
- Watch the exits. Even if your pets are comfortable around guests, make sure you watch them closely, especially when people are entering or leaving your home. While you're welcoming guests and collecting coats, a four-legged family member may make a break for it out the door and become lost.
- Identification tags and microchips reunite families. Make sure your pet has proper identification with your current contact information, particularly a microchip with up-to-date, registered information. That way, if they do sneak out, they're more likely to be returned to you. If your pet isn't already microchipped, talk to your veterinarian about the benefits of this simple procedure.

WHEN YOU LEAVE THE HOUSE

- Unplug decorations while you're not around. Cats and dogs are often tempted to chew electrical cords.
- Take out the trash to make sure your pets can't get to it, especially if it contains any food or food scraps.

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Stock up now for the holidays!



HOLIDAY TRAVEL

If you take your pets with you for holiday traveling, take these precautions to safeguard them. Learn more about these and other traveling with pets tips from the American Veterinary Medical Association's (AVMA) website, www.avma.org. Interstate and international travel regulations require that any pet you bring with you have a health certificate from your veterinarian, even if you are traveling by car. Learn the requirements, available for every state, at the AVMA's website, above, for any states you will visit or pass through, and schedule an appointment with your veterinarian to get the needed certificate within the timeframes required by those states.

- Pets in vehicles should always be safely restrained and should never be left alone in the car in any weather. Proper restraint means using a secure harness or a carrier, placed in a location clear of airbags.
- If you're traveling by air and considering bringing your pet with you, talk with your veterinarian first. Air travel can put some pets at risk, especially very young or old dogs or short-nosed dogs. Your veterinarian is the best person to advise you regarding your own pet's ability to travel.
- Pack for your pet as well as yourself if you're going to travel together. In addition to your pet's food and medications, this includes bringing copies of the animal's medical records, information to help identify your pet if it becomes lost, first aid supplies, and other items. Refer to the AVMA's Traveling with Your Pet FAQs at their website for a more complete list.
- Boarding your dog while you travel? Talk with your veterinarian to find out how best to protect your pet from canine flu and other contagious diseases, and to make sure your pet is up-to-date on vaccinations.

EATING

The holidays are the time of year we all look forward to eating our favorite foods. Our four legged family members feel the same way. Unfortunately, like us, they can overdo it or eat things that aren't good for them. To help them stay healthy remember the following people foods are especially hazardous for pets:

- Chocolate is an essential part of the holidays for many people, but it is toxic to dogs and cats. Although the toxicity can vary based on the type of chocolate, the size of your pet, and the amount eaten, it's safer to consider all chocolate off limits for pets.
- Other sweets and baked goods also should be kept out of reach. The ingredient xylitol (often labeled as sugar-free in baked goods or candy) is highly toxic to dogs. This can be life threatening depending on the amount ingested, so immediate medical intervention may be needed.
- Turkey and turkey skin sometimes even in small amounts can cause a life-threatening condition in pets known as pancreatitis.
- Table scraps, including gravy and meat fat, also should be kept away from pets. Many foods that are healthy for people are poisonous to pets, including onions, raisins and grapes. During the holidays, when our own diets tend toward extra-rich foods, table scraps can be especially fattening and hard for animals to digest and can cause pancreatitis.
- Yeast dough can cause problems for pets, including painful gas and potentially dangerous bloating.

Finally, enjoy the holidays and everyone's favorite pumpkin pie. Pumpkin is good for your pets, too, in moderation. Be sure to use canned pumpkin and not pumpkin pie filling if you are going to give them a treat, or bake your own pie pumpkin and share some with your pets.

Here is my wife Nancy's easy and inexpensive nutritious pumpkin treats you can make for your pets, I like to eat a few too. Our dogs Smokey and Patsy help with the kitchen cleanup by catching any tidbits that fall on the floor.

***LOW-SODIUM & LOW-FAT
PET PUMPKIN TREATS***

Makes about 2 dozen

- 2 ½ cups quick cook oats
 - 2 egg whites
 - ½ cup vegetable water, preferably unsalted (left over from cooking fresh vegetables such as beans, potatoes, spinach, corn or carrots but with NO onion or garlic water)
 - 2 Tablespoons homemade or canned pumpkin puree or substitute low fat Greek yogurt
1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees
 2. Soak oats in vegetable water for a few minutes
 3. Combine soaked oats with the rest of the ingredients
 4. Drop by teaspoonful onto a lightly greased or sprayed cookie sheet
 5. Bake for approximately 20 minutes
 6. Let cool
 7. Store in refrigerator, use within 1 week or freeze **DM**

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