



Paw Prints

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Columnist

Keep your pets safe this holiday season

The holiday season is upon us, and many pet parents plan to include their furry friends in the festivities.

With some planning and a little training, you can make things more festive for Rover and Kitty and less stressful for you. Keep in mind that pets are sensitive to changes in their environment and routines. Especially around the holidays when family members take off from school, houseguests come to stay, or other visitors roll through the house in droves.

You need to stick as closely as possible to your pets' routines — regular meal schedules, walks and play sessions.

One of the best parts about the holidays is all the wonderful food! From turkey to ham and rich chocolate desserts, holiday foods are a popular part of the celebrations. Remember that dogs have an exceptional sense of smell and your dog's nose knows what's cooking and he may even beg for some of the delicious-smelling food that you

are preparing.

But remember, in order to keep Rover safe and healthy during this time of year you'll need to make sure that he stays away from those tempting foods and beverages.

Did you know that rich, fatty foods like ham, gravy, or grease, can cause problems ranging from stomach upsets to pancreatitis, which is an inflammation of the pancreas resulting in pain, vomiting, and dehydration? Pets with this serious condition often require hospitalization for treatment.

Bones, especially turkey bones, are never a good snack for Rover. Dogs can choke on the sharp little edges, or the bones can become lodged or splinter in the digestive tract.

Chocolate and cocoa contain theobromine, which is a chemical that is highly toxic to dogs. Ingestion in even small amounts can cause vomiting and diarrhea, and in large amounts it can cause seizures and can also be fatal.

Keep your dog away from nuts, especially almonds, walnuts and pistachios; they can cause stomach upset. Macadamia nuts can be toxic to dogs!

The holidays should be a happy time for you and your furry friend, not a time for an emergency visit to your veterinarian.

If you don't want your dog to feel left out and you want to give him something special, buy or bake him some special healthy dog treats shaped like candy canes or Christmas trees.

Holiday plants may be beautiful to look at, but one easy way to keep your pooch safe during the holidays is

to avoid bringing mistletoe, holly, poinsettias, and lilies into your home. They can lead to serious health problems if your furry friend decides to chew on one.

There's nothing like a real Christmas tree during the holidays. The pine fragrance is so appealing. Your furry friends think so, too.

Did you know that Christmas trees are considered to be mildly toxic?

Fir tree oils can be irritating to the mouth and stomach. Both live and artificial tree needles are sharp and indigestible. If you have a live Christmas tree, avoid adding fertilizer or aspirin to the water (both are dangerous to your dog). Just be sure to keep your dog away from the water that's keeping your tree fresh, even stagnant water that's in the reservoir could make him sick.

Holiday decorations are meant to spark wonder, curiosity, and delight: which can spell trouble for pets. So, before you hang your precious glass ornaments or wrap all your presents with fun-looking but dangerous ribbons, consider putting them out of reach of your dog or cat. Hang your tree decorations up higher and leave the ribbon off the presents or put them out of reach. All that glitters is not gold, and tinsel, especially if you're a pet parent to a cat, is a real temptation to Kitty because it's sparkly and fun to bat around. But ingestion can obstruct your pet's GI tract and you may end up with a blockage, and a trip to the veterinarian.

Unfortunately, some dogs,

especially puppies, like to chew on electrical cords which can lead to electrical shock, burns or possible death. So, check your holiday lights frequently for any signs of chewing. And turn the lights off and unplug them whenever you are not home.

Candles can also be attractive to pets because of their scent. Make sure they are perched on high shelves or tables out of Rover's reach. Never leave a lit candle unsupervised as they are easily knocked over and quickly become a fire hazard.

Nowhere does the average family dog get into so much trouble as at the front door! Guests do have to knock to be known, and Rover loves to door dash with over-the-top excitement that can make the front door a source of stress for everyone during the holidays. If you haven't had time to train for all the comings and goings at the door, it's always good practice to either have your furry friend crated or provided with a quiet place to retreat during the



PHOTO BY JODI SCHNEIDER MCNAMEE

Mia is supervised through the holiday season.

festivities. Cats also get overwhelmed and over-stimulated like dogs and kids. So, make sure your furry friend whether a dog or cat has his own safe areas with fresh water, a few treats, and toys.

So now you can relax and enjoy the festivities of the holiday knowing that you're taking good care of your furry friend. Once you know the hazards, a little care and precaution will go a long way to keep the holidays a safe and happy time for everyone.

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