

Winter Holiday Tips

The holiday season can be full of excitement for your family, including your dog. Follow our holiday tips to keep everyone safe:

- Dog-proof your holiday tree as much as possible. It's going to be the newest thing in the house and the most interesting! So, of course, it's going to be investigated by your dog. Flashing lights and shiny/glittery ornaments may be targets of interests. Be careful if anything falls off the tree. Pick up ornaments, hooks and tinsel bits. Hang ornaments and lights higher than the dog's reach.
- Christmas tree lights and electrical cords can be fatal if chewed on by a dog (or cat). Whenever possible, keep electrical cords out of reach.
- Stacks of presents also are of interest. Be aware of small gifts and gifts with ornaments hanging from them. If you give food, like cookies, fruit cake or chocolate, the best bet would be keeping these gifts in the cupboard or high up on the counter.
- There are many talented canines that can find ways to climb trees and stacks of presents, or even figure out how to knock down the tree topper. If this is the case, a baby gate may help, or keeping the dog out of the special holiday room during this time. Crate training, or use of an x-pen, will keep your young dog safe during the holidays.
- If this is your first tree, or your first dog, be aware that male dogs may consider the tree "indoor plumbing" (for potty)! Keep close watch on your dog, and maintain good house-training habits by using plenty of praise when the dog goes potty in desired locations.
- What's **poisonous**? Here is a short list of common holiday dangers that can be toxic/fatal to dogs:
 - Holiday pine tree sap from the water container of the Christmas tree
 - Poinsettias
 - Mistletoe
 - Japanese yew
 - Jerusalem cherry
 - Ivy
 - Holly berries
 - Potpourri
 - Chemical tree life extenders
 - Alcohol
 - Chocolate
 - Anti-freeze solutions
- Candles and incense are Bay Area staples. Remember to keep the burning items out of reach and only use scented products in well-ventilated areas. Dogs are far more sensitive to fragrance oils and scents than we are and can have toxic reactions to certain aromatherapy products. Always allow for dogs (and other pets) to have plenty of access to fresh air when using scented products in the house.
- We're all busy with our holiday schedule: the shopping, parties, and volunteering can take time from our normal schedules. Keep the routine as regular as possible for your dog or they may become stressed! Daily walks, playtime and feedings are crucial.
- This is a time of overfeeding for everyone. Small amounts of human food are a fun treat for dogs, but make sure that they do not get overfed during the holidays or they might become ill. **Never** fed cooked bones, onions, grapes, raisins, sugary, salty or high fat foods – these foods can make

your pet severely ill. Guard against trashcan raids, let guests know the rules, and prevent trips to the vet for pancreatitis (from high fat treats), hemolytic anemia (onions), bowel obstructions and preventable poisoning.

- Hosting parties? Be mindful of your dog's temperament and how he reacts to guests. If too many people, or unfamiliar people, make him over-stimulated, stressed, nervous or uncomfortable, keep him secure in a crate or in a safe, quiet room.
- Brrrr! If you have a short-haired dog, he might benefit from a sweater or coat when out walking. Most dogs appreciate an extra blanket in the winter when sleeping, too!
- Never leave dogs outdoors overnight when the temperature drops – always allow dogs access to a safe, dry, warm, secure place - night and day. Any sign that a dog is very cold, such as shivering, is a signal to bring the dog indoors immediately.
- Never leave normally indoor dogs outside in the cold when visiting or vacationing in different climates. For example, apartment dogs from San Francisco are not acclimated to the outdoor conditions of Tahoe in winter, and they can get sick or suffer from hypothermia with prolonged exposure to the cold.

The above tips are for those who already have dogs. **The holiday season is NEVER the time to give a dog as a gift.** Take a trip to the local humane society, rescue or shelter in January, when everything is less hectic. A better alternative would be to give a "new dog" basket, filled with dog care items and treats.