Pet Behavior Tips for the Holidays

Holidays can bring stress to all of us, and pets are no exception. These tips may help reduce your pets’ anxiety this season. Websites with more helpful tips are printed on the reverse.

- Be sure to keep up your pet’s daily walks, exercise, or cuddle sessions. During the holidays, daily routines are disrupted by shopping trips, decorating, and present wrapping. The resulting change in your pet’s schedule is very stressful. Help them by doing activities they enjoy.

- Keep up your good training habits like having your dog perform a sit before meals. Daily obedience training also provides mental stimulation for your pet.

- Prepare your pet for holiday guests by practicing greetings. Heavily reinforce ‘sits’ and ignore jumping up. 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.

- 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. Keep cats confined to a separate room so they don’t accidently run out the door.

- Shy animals can get stressed with the hustle and bustle of holiday guests, so make sure there’s a quiet room to which your pets can retreat. Keep a blanket, fresh water, a litter box (for cats), and a familiar object there for them. Be sure to give them a new toy or treat to make it a positive experience and not feel like a punishment.

- Never leave your pet alone with any children. Interactions between the pet and kids should be strictly supervised by an adult who’s pet-savvy enough to know when your dog or cat needs a break.

- 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.

- Confirmed counter-surfers should be confined away from the food, since the high temptation, high distraction environment of a holiday party will be more than they can bear!

- It is completely acceptable to insist that guests not tease, yell at, feed or grope your pet. In fact, it’s your responsibility as a pet owner to see to your pet’s welfare.

- New Year’s fireworks can be very scary for your pet!

  - Your dog won’t miss the fireworks display, so leave them at home! If loud noises upset your pets, do not leave them alone while you’re out celebrating. Make sure someone stays with them.

  - If you think your pets should be tranquilized, consult your veterinarian well in advance.

  - Contact an animal behaviorist to work with your pets on their fears. With some positive reinforcement and behavior modification training, by the next holiday, you may be worry-free!
1. Dog Behavior: How To Recognize And Reduce Holiday Stress For Your Dog
   by Jim Burwell on December 13, 2010

2. Holiday Pet Health Tips - Pune Draker, ASPCA

3. Holiday Survival Skills for the Family Feline
   http://www.bestfriendspetcare.com/pet-resources/cat-behavior-2/holiday-survival-skills-for-the-family-feline/

4. Holiday Issues – American Humane Association
   http://www.americanhumane.org/animals/adopter-pet-care/issues-information/holiday-issues.html

5. Holiday Training & Safety Tips -
   Written by sbennett on December 22, 2009 in Behavior, Behavior Management, Dogs,
   http://www.houstonpettalk.com/behavior/holiday-training-safety-tips/

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