

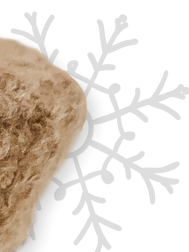
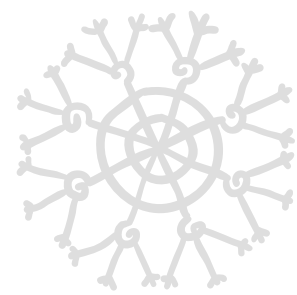


Hounds & the Holidays

Commonsense guidelines will help you enjoy the holiday season with your pets.

By Hilton Butler

Winter is my favorite time of the year: Thanksgiving, Christmas, and spending more time with friends and family. If you are like me, dogs are a big part of the family and get to take part in our time-honored festivities. But not all of our celebrations are canine-friendly. Let's go over how to keep your furry friends safe and happy heading into the new year.



Candy and sweets are not for dogs

Keep all candy treats out of reach of your dog. Chocolate is not good for dogs, and it can be a poison when eaten in large amounts. Some candies use artificial sweeteners like xylitol, which is toxic to dogs. Other ingredients, like sugar, dyes and artificial flavorings, can also cause intestinal upset and might cause an emergency vet visit. Candy wrappers and packaging can lead to choking or gastrointestinal obstructions, which can be deadly. Make sure all wrappers are disposed in a secure trash can that your dog can't open.

Watch out for décor hazards

Holiday decorations are often small, shiny and attractive to curious dogs. Dangling cords of various types are tempting to dogs and, especially, teething puppies. Secure cords and don't allow your dog to chew on them. If your dog bites through a plugged-in electrical cord, it could result in a severe burn to the tongue or an electrical shock. This is an emergency requiring immediate veterinary attention.

Many dogs enjoy sniffing out boxes filled with tasty treats and even items made with leather, such as clothing or sports equipment. If eaten, these items—or the wrapping paper, ribbon or string decorating the box—can cause an intestinal obstruction. Other gifts, like paintballs, can be extremely hazardous to dogs and can cause death if eaten.

Your precocious pup can bring down the Christmas tree, so make sure it is set up securely and cannot fall if your dog decides to investigate. Keep ornaments above tail height if you want them to stay on the tree. Don't let your dog drink live-tree water; it often contains harmful fertilizers and can be a breeding ground for bacteria, which can cause stomach upset.

Never leave candles unattended. One wag of the tail can knock them over, causing burns or a larger fire. Pets cause over 1,000 accidental house fires each year. Consider using battery-powered candles instead.

Beware of festive plants

Contrary to popular belief, poinsettia is not specifically toxic to dogs, but it can cause intestinal upset. Its sap can be irritating to a dog's mouth and stomach if he chews on or eats the leaves or stems of this festive plant. Some mistletoe species are toxic, causing liver failure or seizures, while other species are only irritating to the intestinal tract if ingested. Several types of mistletoe exist, so it's difficult to predict the clinical signs of poisoning with this popular holiday trimming. It is wise to consider mistletoe to be a hazardous substance and keep it out of reach of your pets. Other seasonal plants that are toxic include daffodils and narcissi.

PHOTOGRAPHYENVATO.COM

PHOTOGRAPHYENVATO.COM

Keep table treats to a minimum

We all like to include our pets in holiday meals, but remember that sudden rich diet changes are likely to upset your dog's stomach. Vomiting and diarrhea are common medical problems veterinarians see during holidays. For a special treat, give only a small amount of table food mixed in with his regular dinner. Be wary of feeding leftovers, especially those that contain toxic ingredients for dogs or a lot of fat. Your dog's pancreas can become overworked and inflamed, leading to the serious and painful condition pancreatitis, which usually requires hospitalization and intensive medical treatment.

Ensure any string or packaging used during meal preparation is safely disposed in a sealed garbage container placed out of your dog's reach. Most dogs cannot resist the temptation of garbage and will eat string or other indigestible material, which can cause an intestinal obstruction.

Keep an eye on uncooked bread left to rise on the counter—it's especially tempting to a dog and can lead to an abdominal obstruction. Always make sure food hasn't been inadvertently left within your dog's reach, and keep your pets out of the kitchen during the hustle and bustle of meal prep. The last thing you want is for them to get underfoot, burned or otherwise injured.

Provide a safe, quiet space

Holidays can bring lots of new faces into your home. Provide your dog a quiet space away from company where he can feel safe but still have access to fresh water and some cozy blankets. Take time to play or spend time with your pet during the holidays, and take him for frequent potty breaks outdoors. Work on behavior modifications prior to events—they can help address and relieve anxiety. Sometimes, though, calming medications are needed to minimize your dog's anxiety. Ask your veterinarian for more information and if it would be suitable for your dog.

Prepare for emergencies

Save the phone number and address of your local animal emergency room in your phone, just in case. Keep it on the fridge, so anyone in your home can find it easily. The ASPCA poison hotline number is handy, too: (888) 426-4435.

By observing a few commonsense guidelines, you can share a safe and healthy celebration with your dog while giving thanks for the companionship you enjoy with your two- and four-legged family members. 🐾

TO THE DOGS {SPIRIT}



You can share a safe and healthy celebration with your dog while giving thanks for the companionship.

Hilton Butler



A police officer, husband and father of seven in Frisco, Texas, Hilton Butler and his wife, Christine, run a business training dogs with the skills Hilton learned in the military as a U.S. Air Force K9 officer. While Hilton's military experience sets the stage for his expertise as a trainer and provides access to a side of the dog world few ever see or even know exists, his passion is giving shelter dogs a second chance and matching service dogs to people in need.

Learn More

hiltonbutler.com

[hiltonbutler](#)

[hiltonbutler](#)