

## Merry Christmas To All – 2 and 4 legged, finned and feathered

With a little forethought your family pet(s) can have a happy and safe holiday, like the rest of the family. If you are having a houseful of holiday company you need to make plans for your pet. Unless your pet is super social (s)he may be better off away from the crowd. Crowds can cause a lot of stress for pets who are not used to this. None of us behave our best when stressed. If your pet is not used to small children, avoid the possibility of a bite or a scratch by putting your pet in a safe place away from the kids. Nothing will put a damper on your Christmas and everyone else's like a dog bite or a real good kitty scratch, delivered to a small child trying to hug a dog or pick up a cat.

First, spend some time with your pet playing, walking, cuddling (whatever your pet likes), feed the pet and provide water and a litter box, if it's a cat, and put them in a safe room. Very soft, soothing music may help to keep your pet calm. If it's a dog, don't forget to take him/her out after several hours for a potty break.

If you are going to someone else's home always learn ahead of time how the host(ess) feels about having four legged visitors. A holiday is not the best time to surprise anyone with a pet they weren't expecting. While traveling make sure your pet is in a seat belt or crate. In case of an accident you do not want your pet flying around the car, for your safety and theirs.

If you cannot take your pet along, ensure that you have a reliable caretaker to look after your pet while you are gone. Be sure the pet has met the caretaker before you have a stranger enter your home, without you, or you place your pet with someone they've never seen before.

Whether your pet stays home, goes on a holiday visit with you or is taken care of by someone else, in your absence, be absolutely certain your pet is up to date on vaccines, especially rabies. In the unlikely event of a bite or claw that breaks the skin the first thing the bitten or clawed person will want to know is "Has your pet been vaccinated for rabies". You will save yourself and your pet a whole lot of angst and inconvenience, if the answer is "yes"

Be sure you have proper pet food for your pet so (s)he is not yearning for table food. We all look forward to those family food traditions that we often only eat once a year. Much of this food is so yummy because it is so rich. Some of this food is toxic to your pet and taken to an extreme can be deadly. Rich gravy and turkey can cause pancreatitis for your pet. This will put your pet in a great deal of distress and even lead to death. Pets should never eat chocolate, olives, alcoholic beverages, grapes, raisins and other things found at holiday celebrations. Make sure your pet only gets appropriate pet treats. You don't eat your pets' food so don't let them eat yours.

Many homes decorate with trees and lights and tinsel. Make sure your tree is well anchored so your puddy tat doesn't decide to go for a climb and end up on the floor with a big tree on top of him/her, perhaps causing injury (no one needs vet bills this time of the year, not to mention the time it takes and sometimes follow-up care at this super busy time). Electrical cords can look very inviting to chew on and can get your pet electrocuted. They can be sprayed with bitter apple, which your pet most likely won't like and will stay away from them. Cats love tinsel and have been known to ingest it and get it tangled around intestines, which can ultimately kill a cat. I personally knew of a cat this happened to. The owner was devastated. Pets can choke on paper wrappings and ribbons and bows. Be sure there is a quick disposal of all excess wrappings after opening presents.

Make sure your pets have a safe and warm place to go during these cold winter months. If you leave your pet behind with a caretaker always let them know in writing what to do in case of an emergency and how to find you.

We, at Sammie's Friends wish all (two and four legged, finned and feathered) a safe and joyous holiday season!