



**JULIE BOND
PAWS AND CLAWS**

The holiday season can also be a stressful time for your pets. Changes in the daily schedule, rearranged furniture, a tree in the living room, an increased number and variety of visitors and rambunctious kids can all add to pet's anxiety.

Combine this with the actual physical hazards of the season (strings of lights, tinsel, candles,

Keep your pets stress-free for the holidays

candy, holiday plants and tree ornaments), and you can see why your beloved companions are a bit stressed out too.

Pets exhibit their stress in several ways. They may become overly hyper, bark excessively, jump on people and furniture and get into everything. Some pets, however, become withdrawn, hiding under beds or in closets and refusing to eat.

Often our pets are responding because we are acting differently. Animals are creatures of habit. They are accustomed to eating, sleeping, exercising and playing at designated times. From November through January, however, our routines change reflecting our holiday

commitments, and our pet's world is turned upside down.

It's no wonder a dog who is used to being walked twice a day or going for a morning run is agitated or bouncing off the walls when he's not receiving his usual amount of exercise and stimulation from his owner.

The same applies for the withdrawn pet; he may not be receiving the same kind of one-on-one attention from his owner that he has come to expect.

Although it is difficult, your pets' routines should be maintained as much as possible during the holiday season. Feed your pets at their usual time, check the water bowl frequently, let your dogs out to relieve themselves regularly (check the litter box too) and provide a comfortable, quiet place of refuge for your pets to retreat to if they need to escape the chaos around them.

BEWARE OF HOLIDAY DANGERS

• *Poinsettias, holly berries and mistletoe are toxic if ingested by your pets, so keep them out of reach.* If you add preservatives to your Christmas tree's water, this water can be toxic if consumed. If you think your pet may have sampled one of these plants or used the tree stand as a water bowl, call your veterinarian immediately.

• *Tinsel, holiday wrappings, ornaments that look like toys and ornament hangers can all be hazardous to your pet if ingested.* It's fine to

wrap gifts for your pet – just remember to monitor them when they open their gifts and don't place their gifts under the tree before you are ready for them to be opened. Pets can sniff out their gifts and may topple the tree or get tangled in cords looking for them.

• *In addition, electrical cords for holiday lights are extremely dangerous.* Keep the cords tied up and out of reach.

• *Baker's chocolate used to make many holiday treats is toxic and can even be fatal for your pets.* Do not let your pet sample chocolate treats and don't leave them within easy reach on low coffee tables or wrapped under the tree. Your pets have a much better sense of smell than you do.

• *Rich holiday foods, laden with sugar and fat, can often give your pets severe gastrointestinal complaints.* Refrain from feeding them "people food" they are not used to receiving. Instead, use their own food or treats to reward them for good behavior.

THE GIFT OF YOUR LOVE

It is particularly important to keep working with your dogs on their basic behaviors during the holidays. You don't want to teach your pet any new behaviors since this might add to their stress, but you should keep working on the behaviors he already knows.

Don't allow your pets to get away with bad behavior during the holidays as this will carry over once the season is long gone.

Finally, although it may seem like the finest gift of all, refrain from giving pets as gifts. Many people find it hard to cope with the needs of a new pet (especially a puppy or kitten) while they are dealing with all the other stresses of the season.

Instead, give a homemade gift certificate good for a trip to the local shelter, pet store or breeder's home to look for that new pet after the holidays. This gives the recipient something to look forward to and gives them the time needed to prepare themselves, and their home, for a new arrival.

The holidays may be hectic, but they are a wonderful time to

reconnect with family and friends. Make sure you spend quality time with your pets and keep in mind how stress-reducing their company can be for all of you. Just by simply being together, you and your pet can reduce each other's stress, improve your moods and enhance each other's well-being. What a great gift that we can actually give ourselves the whole year through.

Julie Bond is an animal behaviorist. Address your pet questions to her at P.O. Box 511, Los Altos, CA 94023, or you can e-mail her at K9Freud@aol.com.

Dear Readers:
I simply want to thank each one of you for your attention to my columns here in the Pioneer. Many of you have emailed me, or even stopped me on the street, to tell me how much you enjoyed a particular column. I am so pleased that you have enjoyed them as much as I've enjoyed contributing to this fine publication.
It is with great sadness that I say that this is my last column for the Clayton Pioneer. I have moved to Palo Alto and am thus outside of the core area reached by your paper. I will still be treating behavior problems and working with your local veterinarians; I simply won't be "seen" here on the pages of the Pioneer.
Thank you again for your comments, encouragement, and the wonderful pet stories. Happy Holidays to you all!
Fondly, Julie C. Bond, M.S.
Certified Animal Behaviorist

And a huge THANK YOU to Julie for all her great contributions to the Pioneer. We wish her all the very best in her new town.
- The Pioneer Staff

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