

Keeping your dog safe during the festive season



The Christmas and New Year Period is a time for celebration, family, and friends. But is it important to understand that many of the things we do, may pose a risk to our pet's health and wellbeing.

Here are a few things to consider to keep your dog safe and happy:

1. Decorations can pose a hazard

For many people decorating their home and garden is a big part of their festive tradition. Whether it is a simple Christmas tree with presents underneath or decorations that rival the Myer Christmas windows, we need to be careful that our dogs don't end up getting hurt, or worse still, ending up at the vet as a result.

Some wrappings and decorations pose a hazard if they break/shatter, end up in your dog's mouth, or are swallowed. Baubles and other ornaments might look like toys to your dog, and sparkling and hanging items may catch their attention.

Christmas lights are pretty, but they come with all the hazards of other electrical and battery-powered items.

Even many of the plants used to decorate at Christmas (such as holly, poinsettias, and mistletoe) can be toxic to dogs if they are ingested. Those that are not toxic can still cause stomach upsets if your dog chews, licks or ingests them.

Decorate your home with your pets in mind!

Keep decorations out of reach or put up a barrier that restricts your pet's access to areas that might be unsafe.

Make sure that your Christmas tree cannot fall over and that all electrical cables are well out of reach of your pets. Your dog is naturally going to be inquisitive so make sure they can't get themselves into trouble



2. Festive Foods

We all tend to overindulge during the festive season, and it is important to remember that not all human foods are good for our dogs. Many foods can be outright toxic to dogs, but even just sudden changes in diet may lead to tummy upsets, vomiting and diarrhoea.

It is tempting to put all those leftovers in the dog's bowl but think carefully about what, and how much, they eat.

Chocolate, cooked bones, dairy products, grapes, raisins (often hidden in the Christmas pudding!), onion, and items containing artificial sweeteners can all be very dangerous.

Although many dogs will be fine tucking into a little bit of turkey or ham, sudden increases in fat content in their diet can lead to life-threatening pancreatitis in some dogs.

Think carefully about what you feed your dogs, and if you are having visitors, make sure that they are not contributing to the problem by feeding scraps or treats to your dogs throughout the day.

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3. Visitors

The festive season is often full of visitors – both family and friends. This poses several challenges, even if your dog is well-socialised and trained.

The excitement of celebrations and the chaos of extended festivities can be overwhelming for all of us, so take time to consider your dog's safety and give them a safe and quiet place they can retreat to – away from all the noise and unfamiliar people.

Although many of us have a dog that is involved in all of our day-to-day activities, it may be wise to plan to have the dog separated from the excitement, food, hyped-up children and unusual household traffic.

Consider exercising your dog before an event and then locking them safely away with their favourite toys or enrichment items. This way you don't have to be watching out for them all the time, and there is no risk of them getting into areas they shouldn't or worse still escaping when someone leaves a door or gate open.

Having your dog confined also means that they are not exposed to inappropriate interactions from children or other guests.

4. Fireworks

The Christmas and New Year period is a time when there may be events with fireworks. For many dogs, this is a very scary thing. The loud and unpredictable noise is terrifying. In response, some dogs will try to hide, others may pace and whine, whilst many try to escape from the noise in their panicked state.

Many Local Councils now notify residents if there are going to be fireworks, giving owners time to prepare or plan to avoid being in the area. If your dog is fearful during fireworks or thunderstorms there is a lot that you can do to help them – Dogs Victoria has a [fact sheet](#) that can help you with some strategies.

5. Going Away?

Many people take a holiday at this time of year, so it is important to make sure your pets are properly looked after. Whether you use a boarding kennel, pet sitter, or family, you want to make sure your dog is safe and happy.

If you are taking your dog on holiday with you, make sure that their microchip details are up to date, and that they wear ID with contact details on it.

If you are travelling you may need to consider heartworm, ticks or other diseases that do not occur in your area - calling ahead to the vet clinic in the area will help you know what to expect, and how you can help to keep your dog safe whilst travelling.

