



SAN TAN CANINE TRAINING NEWSLETTER

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Deck the Halls

When you share your home with animal companions, it's important to take their safety into consideration as you're decorating for the holidays. It doesn't mean you have to forgo your lights, ornament and greenery, but you may have to make some changes in order to keep your dog from getting hurt or sick.

STAYING GREEN

There's nothing like the fragrance of a live tree, but the needles and tree water can be toxic if ingested. A lot of people balk at the idea of an artificial tree, but the newer models look quite realistic. Even though the artificial ones don't have that lovely evergreen scent, they look just as nice as the live ones do once they are decorated. Most importantly, the "needles" are non-toxic and fireproof, which means they're a lot safer for people and animals.

You can still use live greenery swags and wreaths, but pine, spruce, hemlock, holly and other seasonal greens can be harmful if eaten by a dog. Make sure such decorations are hung out of your animal's reach, and check regularly for any fallen berries, needles or cones. Get rid of greenery once it dries out and start to drop profusely.

Holiday plants such as poinsettias, amaryllis, Christmas cactus, cyclamens and potted Norfolk Island pines are popular gifts this time of year, but should also be kept out of your animal's reach. Hanging baskets work well for some of these plants. As with live greenery, check them frequently for dropped leaves or flowers.

ANIMAL FRIENDLY ORNAMENTS

If you have breakable glass Christmas bulbs and other decorations, hang them near the top of the tree and reserve the bottom boughs for plastic and wooden ornaments. True, your tree won't look perfectly decorated, but it's better than having to rush your companion to the vet because he has shards of glass in his mouth or throat. It also preserves your more valuable ornament from breakage.

Avoid handing edibles on your tree, unless you want your canine companion stealing cookies and candy canes while your back is turned, and upsetting his stomach into the bargain. Popcorn strings are a no-no if you have a dog that eats everything – including the string the popcorn is hung on. If you just can't give up edible decorations, use them to adorn out-of-reach swags and wreaths. The same applies to tinsel, which can cause severe intestinal problems if swallowed.

By making a few compromises and taking some extra care, you'll find that dogs and holiday decorations can co-exist happily and safely.

CANDLE CUNNING

The holidays wouldn't be the same without candles. But what kind are you burning? Paraffin candles emit toxins, including carcinogenic smoke. Paraffin is a byproduct of petroleum and therefore not a healthy thing to be burning inside your home.

Popular alternative include beeswax and soy candles. In fact, burning beeswax candles can actually clean the air in your home by producing negative ions that help remove dust, allergens and odors.

Remember to keep candles well out of the way of waving tails and inquisitive noses or paws, and never leaving burning candles unattended.



Season Greetings!



SEASONAL STRESS?

Want to help your dog cope with the holiday hustle and bustle?
Sit down and talk to him!

'Tis the season to be jolly. For us, that is. Our animal friends may not share our sentiments. What with everything going on this time of year, how is a respectable dog to make sense of it all? Adding your own stress to the mix can easily overwhelm or even traumatize your sensitive animal friends. But take heart – an awareness of your dog's viewpoint and a little basic animal communication may be all that's needed.

A LITTLE CHANGE GOES ALONG WAY

Most dogs thrive on routine. It makes them feel safe and reassures them. Familiar food at regular meal times, walks at the same time each day, and some predictability in your comings and goings keeps stress away and helps your animal relax. Understanding this vital fact explains why your dog may become upset and even act out or have behavioral lapses at holiday time.

Besides disruptions in routine, other unsettling holiday changes may include frequent visitors, music and dancing, vacations, not to mention strange objects coming into the house, each having a new and different scent: gifts and decorations, wrapping paper and presents, new and different foods, wreaths and Christmas trees. Even extra cooking, baking, cleaning and furniture moving can disconcert your animal companion. His territory might be invaded if family and friends bring their own animals with them on visits. All this can feel very threatening and scary.

Aside from some very enthusiastic individuals, most dogs absolutely hate surprises. Think about it: wouldn't it be hard on you too, if you were suddenly wakened from a sound sleep by the doorbell and the unexpected appearance of several guests. It can be downright terrifying for a timid or anxious animal already upset by holiday-triggered changes in the household routine. Even social dogs can become overexcited, nervous and cranky from too much stimulation.

TELL YOUR DOG WHAT'S HAPPENING

You can remove the element of surprise and help reduce stress by communicating with your animal friend and letting him know what to expect.



Sit down with him and try your best to clear other matters from your mind.



Spend a moment admiring your dog, and feel the love you share.



When you feel clear and calm, talk to him just as if you were speaking to another human.

Animals are telepathic and understand so much of what we say – not from the language we use, but from the images and emotions we form while speaking the words. We're usually not even aware of these images and feelings, yet we form them nevertheless. And our animals can read them very well.

Feeling calm and relaxed as you talk to your dog is crucial. Any trace of anxiety on your part will send the message that you're upset by the upcoming event and he should be as well. Our animals look to us for safety and leadership. Fear or stress in our lives is reflected in them and their behavior. It's easy to understand why: our animals depend on us for their livelihood, and they interpret our anxiety as a cue that life is not safe.

GIFT CERTIFICATES

A gift certificate from San Tan Canine Training makes a great gift for the holiday season. Call now and request a gift certificate for a friend or family member.

(602) 320-2890

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