

PRESS RELEASE:
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THE GRATEFUL DOG OFFERS PET FRIENDLY HOLIDAY DOS AND DON'TS

Dog Trainer and AKC Breeder Mary Ellen Walsh Warns of Common Holiday Pet Dangers

Westport, CT, (November 27, 2005) – The holidays are a busy time ... a time of planning, shopping, baking, and rushing to parties with relatives and friends. With all the festivities, we often overlook our four-legged friends and the common holiday dangers tempting their curiosity. Each year, thousands of pets are seriously injured or become deathly ill due to these typical household hazards.

"Dogs and cats are like young children: on the move but not completely aware of the dangers surrounding them," warns Mary Ellen Walsh, canine behaviorist and owner of the Grateful Dog. "As a rule of thumb, if you think something would be a problem for your child, then it will be a problem for your pets."

Pet Friendly Holiday Dos and Don'ts:

As a certified Association Pet Dog Trainer, Ms. Walsh has consulted thousands of pet owners over her 25 year career. To help protect your dog or cat this holiday, she is offering these pet safety tips.

DO ...

- Let your animals be part of the festivities. Include them in after-dinner walks, fun, and games.
- Introduce your dogs to your company. To avoid injuries or accidents, let everyone know what things bother them, and what they can and cannot tolerate.
- If you must feed your pets leftovers, make sure you feed them a moderated amount and include vegetables. Remember NO bones or turkey skin (NEVER chocolate – it is toxic).
- Buy a present for your pets. They are part of the family, too. A new toy will keep them busy while you open your presents.

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- Keep tinsel and glass ornaments on higher branches. Both can injure dogs and cats. Secure your tree, especially if you have cats. Cats are known to be very acrobatic and will try to jump on trees.
- Keep pets away from the Christmas tree (or yard displays), unless they are supervised. Dogs who love to chew may be tempted by electrical cords.
- Be mindful of harsh salts and ice-melting products. Many of these can irritate your pets' feet.

DON'T...

- Lock your animals in the basement. They need to have fun too. Use a baby gate to keep them in one room so they can see you and be let out periodically for fun and games.
- Overdue the treats. Obesity is a huge problem in pets. Especially during the holidays when activity shifts indoors, pets are less active, and people tend to give them more treats. Many pets would prefer more attention from you as a gift instead of food.
- Place tinsel or glass ornaments on the bottom branches of your tree. Cats love to play with both of these decorations and can be severely harmed if they ingest either of them. Tinsel can bind up the intestines and cause severe colic. Glass ornaments can break easily, and small sharp pieces can be swallowed or cut your pets.
- Use Christmas tree preservatives and chemicals (most of which have some toxicity). Dogs and cats have a much lower line of sight than do adults. To them, the Christmas tree stand looks like a water bowl or a fun toy to play with.

Most importantly, avoid giving a pet as a surprise present. The recipient may not be prepared for the commitment of a puppy or kitten. The holiday season is also not the best time to introduce a new pet into the household. A puppy or kitten trying to adjust to a home that is bustling with relatives, or vacant because the family is traveling, can be traumatized.

“A pet is forever, not just for the holidays,” said Ms. Walsh, a champion American Kennel Club breeder. “Instead, consider giving gift certificates or supplies as gifts, rather than a new pet on Christmas or Hanukah. Most people would like to choose their own pet – one that fits their lifestyle.”

The Grateful Dog LLC provides private, in-home and off-site dog training using non-threatening, non-intimidating methods. Owner Mary Ellen Walsh teaches pet owners how to understand canine behavior and successfully train their dog using her “think like your dog” positive training philosophy. Serving the Fairfield and Westchester County areas, The Grateful Dog offers group training classes on obedience, behavior improvements, and puppy socialization – each focused on communicating with your dog through the power of positive reinforcement. Ms. Walsh advises various dog organizations, such as the North Star Foundation, and offers private phone consultations nationwide by appointment. For more information, call 203-929-5118 or visit www.thegratefuldogllc.com