Fear Free® Holiday Gatherings
Thanksgiving Tips for a Calm and Happy Pet

The holiday season is a joyful time for gathering, but it can be challenging for pets. New people, noise, and changes in routine can increase stress. With a little planning, you can help your pets feel safe and comfortable. Here are Fear Free tips for a calm, happy Thanksgiving for the whole family, furry friends included.

Create a Fear Free Safe Space for Pets

Provide a comfortable, secluded area (room, crate, favorite bed or perch) with bedding, calming scents, soothing music (classical, species-specific, reggae, soft rock tunes), white noise, and calming, species-specific pheromones to help pets relax and recover from overstimulation.

Limit Access to Food & Guests' Belongings

Keep pets away from counters and tables to prevent them from getting into unsafe foods. Use a leash, baby gates, or similar tools to manage space, and place pets in their Fear Free Safe Space or crate when they can't be supervised. Ask guests to keep bags out of reach.

Respect Signals

If your pet shows signs of discomfort (hiding, swatting, trying to leave), give them space and don't force interactions.

Calming Pheromones & Medications

Ask your vet whether calming pheromones, supplements, or medications could help support your pet's comfort.

Maintain Routines

Holiday schedules can feel exciting to us, but they can be overwhelming for pets. Keeping familiar routines helps them feel safe. Try to feed meals at their usual times and stick to their regular food. Keep their cozy spots and bedding the same — familiar scents are calming and reassuring.

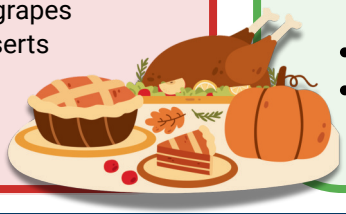
For cats, keep their litter box setup consistent (one box per cat, plus one extra). And no matter how busy the day gets, make time for the things your pet enjoys most: a walk, a play break, or a quiet snuggle can go a long way in helping them relax.

Consider Alternative Care Options

Some pets feel more relaxed in familiar, low-stress environments. If holiday gatherings may be overwhelming, consider a Fear Free Certified Pet Sitter or a boarding/daycare staffed by Fear Free Certified professionals. These caregivers are trained to support emotional wellbeing and reduce stress, helping the holidays feel easier for both pets and people.

Foods Pets Should Avoid

- ✕ Chocolate
- ✕ Nuts
- ✕ Rich or fatty foods (butter, turkey skin, drippings, dark meat)
- ✕ Cooked turkey bones (choking or blockage risk)
- ✕ Regular gravy (high salt/fat)
- ✕ Garlic, onions, chives, scallions
- ✕ Candied sweet potatoes or yams
- ✕ Raisins, currants, grapes
- ✕ Sugary sides/desserts (cranberry sauce, pie)
- ✕ Stuffing



Thanksgiving Foods Pets May Enjoy

Check with your veterinarian first. If approved, offer foods plain (no butter, oil, salt, sugar, or seasonings) and only in small amounts.

- Lean pieces of turkey breast
- Cooked sweet potato
- Unseasoned green beans or carrots
- Plain mashed potatoes
- Plain squash or pumpkin (cooked or canned)
- Fat-free gravy
- Low-sodium chicken, beef, or veggie broth



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Fear Free™ HAPPY HOMES

Fear Free® Leaders in Animal Wellbeing

CITY OF CHULA VISTA | ANIMAL CARE FACILITY

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Thanksgiving Food Safety Tips

- Don't feed Thanksgiving dinner to your pet, excessive amounts of food can lead to pancreatitis, a life threatening condition.
- Don't feed your pet the bones, they pose a choking hazard. Bones can get also become stuck in the intestinal track resulting in a medical emergency.
- Keep holiday cocktails and alcoholic beverages out of pets reach. They may cause weakness, coma and even death through respiratory complications.
- Clear off the table to prevent pets from licking the plate clean.
- Take the trash out or have a trashcan that locks, pets may rip open trash bags with scraps.
- Give pets a comfortable room with food/ water, closed door and their species specific holiday treats from the pet store to prevent any accidents

References: https://www.aspca.org/pet-care/general-pet-care/holiday-safety-tips, https://www.avma.org/public/PetCare/Pages/holidays.aspx?utm_source=prettyurl&utm_campaign=holiday&utm_term=holiday



Fourth of July Fireworks for Your Pet

Fireworks for Your Pet

It's no mystery that dogs can hear better than humans, but did you know cats can actually hear better than dogs? This remarkable ability to hear causes some pets to become overwhelmed during a fireworks celebration. Pets become scared, lost or injured while we are celebrating. The Chula Vista Animal Care Facility is impacted greatly after the Fourth of July. We would like to help you by sharing our tips on keeping your furry friends safe for the holiday. Make sure to consult with your veterinarian for any questions regarding anxiety in your pet.

Preparation

- Take a current photo of your pet. This is helpful in the event your pet does run off. With the current photo you can easily make flyers to share. You can also upload a photo to Finding Rover after you download the application to your phone.
- Have a current ID tag with up to date contact information. Dogs should have their dog license on. Make sure the tags are on an appropriate fitting collar. You should be able to place two figures between the neck and the collar.
- Microchip furry friends if you haven't already. Sometimes collars break or fall off. Having a microchip implanted helps keep your information with your pet at all times. Microchips are the size of a grain of rice and are placed under the skin. Make sure you update the microchip company with new addresses and phone numbers as they change.
- Purchase calming supplements for your pet ahead of time if your pet has a history of 4th of July anxiety. Always use species specific supplements. For example: cats should only use supplements specifically labeled for use in feline or cat. NEVER use human medications. Using medications intended for use in humans can lead to death in your furry friend.

During the Festivities

- Plan to leave your furry friends at home. Do not take them to see fireworks with you. Remember, your pets hearing is much better than yours and being directly under fireworks can cause your pet to panic.
- If you plan to give calming supplements, they should be given in advance according to directions. They take time to start working. If you give supplements late they will not be as affective. NEVER use human medication.

- The use of a Thunder Shirt can help reduce 4th of July anxiety. When fitted appropriately, Thunder Shirts help reduce anxiety by applying gentle, consistent pressure over the cat or dog's body. The snug fitting shirt helps calm your furry friend without the use of medications.
- Keep pets indoors even if they are accustomed to being outside.
- Using a room with no windows is best. Some pets have actually jumped through windows in a panic. Keep curtains closed if windows are unavoidable. This will help block fireworks visually.
- Play the TV or radio to help muffle the sound of the fireworks.
- Give canine friends a long-lasting treat like a stuffed Kong. This helps keep them occupied while also associating something positive with the scary sounds of fireworks.
- If you are having company at home be careful your guest does not leave the front door open. You can choose to have your furry friends stay in a designated room or crated to prevent them from running outside.

Lost Pet

Sometimes accidents happen even when we try to prepare our best. Here are some tips just in case your furry friend still gets lost.

- Contact your microchip company and update the status to MISSING.
- Search online at https://24petconnect.com
- It is also recommended to look online on Facebook, Craigslist, Pawboost, Finding Rover or other similar sites. You can also post about your missing pet.
- Remember that photo we advised you to take? Use the photo to make flyers to post at animal shelters, veterinary clinics, pet stores, online and throughout the community
- Don't give up! Some pets have been reunited even after months of being missing.

Found a Lost Pet

If you find a lost pet bring them to the animal shelter in the city where the animal was found in. We encourage you to find out what animal shelter your city uses and their hours of operation. If you find a lost pet after hours and cannot house them overnight contact your local animal control or police department non-emergency phone line. If the animal is injured contact an emergency veterinary clinic.

Halloween Safety Tips for Your Pets

Halloween can be a fun and exciting holiday to celebrate with family and neighbors but for some pets it can be a real nightmare! Here are some tips from us at the CVACF for keeping your beloved pet safe for the holiday.

- **Costumes** are adorable on our pets but can cause harm if not properly fitted. Make sure costumes do not interfere with movement, sight or restrict panting (such as some muzzles). Do not leave costumes on pets unsupervised. Pets can chew on costumes and get fragments of the material stuck in the intestinal track which can lead to a surgical emergency. Practice wearing the costume ahead of time to help reduce stress in your pet.
- **Candy** can be toxic to your pet. Keep the candy bowl out of your pets reach. Xylitol can be found in candies, gum and baked goods. It is a sugar alcohol used for sugar free products. This can be toxic to dogs and cause liver failure. Chocolate naturally contains methylxanthines (theobromine and caffeine) and can be extremely toxic. The darker the chocolate the more toxic it can be and in severe cases can cause seizures and/or cardiac arrest. Candy wrappers and lollipop sticks can get stuck in the intestinal track. Symptoms of toxicity can include vomiting, diarrhea, excessive panting, restlessness or weakness. If your pet ingests candy or show symptoms you should contact your veterinarian immediately for the best advice. You can also call the ASPCA Animal Poison Control line at 1-888-426-4435.
- **Visitors** at the door can give your pet an opportunity to door dash. This makes them at risk of getting lost or even hit by a car. If your dog is crate trained it would be a good idea to crate your dog during festivities. For dogs not associated with the crate or cats you can let them sleep in the room they are the most comfortable in. Keep the door to this room closed to prevent door dashing. Leave a tasty treat or Kong to help keep them happy.
- **Animals Outside** should be brought in. The activities of Halloween can scare off your pet. Cats should take added precaution as they can jump fences and easily get lost. Make sure your pet has a collar with a current phone number and a current license for dogs. Microchipping your pet is highly recommended. Current identification is recommended for indoor animals as well.
- **Pets Trick or Treating** should wear reflective collars or blinking accessories to be visible at night. All dogs should be on a leash 6’ or less. Pay close attention when having your dog around people and children. Scary costumes can make dogs fearful and may result in bites, even with well socialized dogs. Keep an eye for signs of distress or overheating; excessive panting, frequent stopping or collapsing. If not addressed this can send your dog into a medical emergency.

References; http://www.merckvetmanual.com/toxicology/food-hazards/chocolate, http://www.merckvetmanual.com/toxicology/food-hazards/xylitol, https://www.aspca.org/pet-care/animal-poison-control

Christmas Safety Tips

Plants and Decorations

- **Christmas Tree:** Securely anchor your Christmas tree so it doesn't tip and fall, For live trees cover the water container so your pets are not exposed to bacteria and any preservation additives. These can cause vomiting and diarrhea. Keep those pine needles cleaned up. They can cause punctures in your pet's intestinal tract.

- **Mistletoe, Poinsettia, Holiday Lilies & Holly:** Holly, when ingested, can cause pets to suffer nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. Mistletoe can cause gastrointestinal upset and cardiovascular problems. And many varieties of lilies can cause kidney failure in cats if ingested. Use artificial plants made from silk or plastic.

- **Tinsel:** Kitties love this sparkly, light-catching "toy" that's easy to bat around and carry in their mouths. Ingesting tinsel can lead to an obstructed digestive tract and severe vomiting. If you are using tinsel place it up high on your tree.

- **Candles:** Don't leave lighted candles unattended. Pets may burn themselves or cause a fire if they knock candles over. Be sure to use appropriate candle holders, placed on a stable surface. And if you leave the room, put the candle out!

- **Wires, Electrical Cords, Batteries and Ornaments:** Keep wires, batteries and glass or plastic ornaments out of paws' reach. A wire can deliver a potentially lethal electrical shock and a punctured battery can cause burns to the mouth and esophagus, while shards of breakable ornaments can damage your pet's mouth and digestive tract.

Holiday Food

- **Skip the Sweets:** By now you know not to feed your pets chocolate and anything sweetened with xylitol, Make sure to keep your pets away from the table and unattended plates of food, and be sure to secure the lids on garbage cans.

- **Leave the Leftovers:** Fatty, spicy and no-no human foods, as well as bones, should not be fed to your furry friends. Please remind visitors that your pets have their own special snacks.

- **Cocktails:** If your celebration includes adult holiday beverages, be sure to place your unattended alcoholic drinks where pets cannot get to them. If ingested, your pet could become weak, ill and may even go into a coma, possibly resulting in death from respiratory failure.