



APONC HEALTH NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2024 ISSUE

In this Issue

The Health Committee's December Newsletter covers Holiday topics.

There are two articles from AKC; one on behavior and one on food. Both articles were reproduced in their entirety with permission.

The APONC Health Committee wishes everyone a festive and safe holiday season.

Newsletter Editor: Chris Gibson

How to Prepare Your Dog for the Holiday Season

By Stephanie Gibeault, MSc, CPDT

Updated: Nov 14, 2024

With so many festivities, from Thanksgiving and Hanukkah to Christmas and Kwanzaa, the end of the year is an incredibly busy time. All that additional excitement and activity can be a lot for your dog to handle. Not to mention all the extra visitors, sights, sounds, and smells. Plus, it's easy to get wrapped up in holiday preparation and neglect your dog's regular routines. Add all that up, and you have a recipe for dog stress. The following tips will help you prepare your dog so you can both enjoy the coming holiday season.

Consider Your Dog's Personality

Some dogs adapt well to chaos and change while others need the predictability of routine. Some dogs can handle lots of visitors, but other dogs become anxious around children or strangers. Some make well-mannered house guests; others are better left at home. Think about what your holiday might entail and then consider your dog's personality. If you anticipate your dog's needs, it'll be easier to accommodate them.

Don't expect your dog to simply cope. A stressed dog might act out and exhibit problem behaviors or even become aggressive. And it's not fun for your dog to endure stressful situations. Instead, help your dog in whatever way suits them. Will they be happier in their crate when company comes over? Then be sure you have plenty of chews and food-stuffed toys to keep them occupied while they're inside. Will they need exercise and potty breaks in the middle of the day? Then schedule that into your holiday routine. The more you can adapt to your dog's needs, the better the holiday will be for everyone.

Purchase Appropriate Supplies

Stock up on all the items your dog is going to need. With a huge holiday to-do list, it's easy to forget your dog has a shopping list too. Purchase food and treats. You want to be able to reward good behavior. Also look for chews and food-dispensing toys to keep your dog occupied when your attention is elsewhere.

Consider buying your dog something special like a new toy or some bully sticks. It's fun to let them participate in holiday gift-giving, but it'll also help them form positive associations with the hustle and bustle of the holidays. And if you think you might need dog gates or an exercise pen to keep your dog out of a certain area, get these barricades in place in advance so your dog can get used to them.

Stick to Routine

When the big day arrives, try to stick to your dog's usual routine as much as possible including mealtimes, potty breaks, and exercise. The predictability will help your dog feel less overwhelmed. Since you'll be incredibly busy, it's important to discuss with family members who will be responsible for the dog's needs. Assign dog duties in advance so you don't neglect anything.

Exercise is particularly important right before visitors arrive or before meals. It'll burn off your dog's excess energy, which might be more than usual with all the activity going on around them. A tired dog is more likely to nap than bother your guests or beg at the table. If you can't provide physical exercise, be sure to get your dog's brain working. Mentally stimulating games can be just as tiring.

Brush Up on Training Skills

The holiday season might be a tricky time to start training new behaviors. You'll likely be too busy to be consistent. But you can certainly brush up on the behaviors your dog already knows. Basics like sit, down, and stay are helpful for controlling your dog's behavior. Cues like leave it and go to your place are also incredibly useful. They allow you to be proactive and prevent problems before they occur.

Manage the Situation

If your dog's obedience skills need work, or you know their personality won't mesh with your holiday plans, then you need to manage the situation for your dog. First, you don't want your dog practicing rude behaviors like begging at the table or counter surfing. Second, you don't want to push your dog past what they can tolerate.

Management will vary based on your dog's personality. It might mean blocking access to certain rooms, using a crate when you have company, or keeping your dog on a leash when people come to the door. The important part is to make the experience rewarding for your dog. This isn't a punishment. If you put your dog in their crate, provide them with a special chew toy. If they're tethered in one area, provide treats and toys in that area, and so on.

Be sure to get your dog's brain working. Mentally stimulating g Even if your dog can handle the holiday commotion, it's still a good idea to give them an occasional break from the excitement. Alone time is a proactive way of ensuring you don't ask for too much from your dog. Family mealtimes are a great opportunity to put your dog in their crate or ask them to go to their place in a quiet room. You can focus on your feast, and your dog can rest and recharge.

The last component of management is puppy-proofing. No matter the age of your dog, ensure there is nothing dangerous for them to get into. That includes holiday plants and foods that are toxic to dogs, like chocolate. Don't leave anything where your dog can sneak a bite. Also, watch where you place decorations. A curious dog can be injured if they try to chew or swallow them.

Consider your dog's needs and avoid adding undue stress during this hectic time. It may be a lot of work but preparing your home and your dog for the holiday season will help ensure everybody enjoys t this special time of year. Your dog will thank you for it

Which Holiday Foods Can I Give My Dog?

By Mary Kears Updated: Oct 23, 2024

While many of us already know we're going to overeat on Thanksgiving, we still need to apply some restraint when it comes to sharing Thanksgiving foods with our dogs.

It's not just the obvious cautions—like splintering roasted turkey bones or toxic onion-filled stuffing—that are unsafe choices for your dogs. There are other known foods that are toxic to dogs and should be kept off their plates. That said, plenty of fall favorite foods can be tasty and safe options in small portions during holiday festivities.

Safe Foods to Feed Dogs

Every Holiday Day table is a little bit different, but there are some foods that make an appearance on just about every table, and many of those tables might have a hopeful dog snoozing underneath, waiting for a stray bite of people food.

Sweet Potatoes

"Sweet potatoes are a great source of dietary fiber, vitamin B6, vitamin C, and beta-carotene," says Dr. Gary Richter, MS, DVM, author of "The Ultimate Pet Health Guide: Breakthrough Nutrition and Integrative Care for Dogs and Cats." "Sweet potato treats can be as simple as a dehydrated sweet potato chew." Plain mashed sweet potatoes are an option you might find at the table. Just remember not to give your pet sweet potatoes loaded up with added ingredients like brown sugar, marshmallows, or maple syrup.

Potatoes

You may already know your dog loves the occasional french fry. For the holiday meal, opt to share boiled or baked potatoes with your dog. Save the mashed potatoes whipped with butter and cream (and sometimes onions or garlic) for your own plate.

Apples

Apples are full of vitamins A and C and contain lots of great fiber, making them a healthy treat for your pet," says Dr. Richter. "However, if you're sharing an apple with your pooch, be sure to cut around the core, as large amounts of apple seeds can be toxic." Sliced fresh apples are on your dog's menu, or an apple-cinnamon dog cookie, but please keep the slab of apple pie on human plates only.

Turkey Meat (Without Bones or Skin)

If you're wondering if dogs can eat turkey, the answer is yes, but with some caveats. Turkey meat is okay to offer up "as long as it has not been prepared with any seasoning," says Dr. Sara Ochoa, DVM, a small animal and exotic veterinarian in Texas. That probably rules out your perfectly roasted holiday bird.

AKC Chief Veterinarian Dr. Klein advises owners to skip out on feeding turkey bones or turkey skin. Skin itself can be fatty, and the outer layer of the turkey's skin was likely slathered in butter or oil before cooking, all of which can add up to triggering a bout of painful and dangerous pancreatitis or other digestive issues for your dog. If you'd like to share turkey with your dog without worrying about preparing a separate, dog-safe portion, you can look for Thanksgiving-themed canned dog food that did the work for you.

Green Beans

"With ample amounts of plant fiber, manganese, and vitamins C and K, plain green beans are great for dogs," says Dr. Richter. The key here is that the green beans should be prepared and served plain, without added ingredients like butter or salt. Set aside a special portion of plain green beans for your dog if you know they love these veggies.

Peas

Plain peas are a fine addition to a dog's diet in moderation, but creamed peas are a no-go, just like creamy mashed potatoes. Any fatty food or casserole risks triggering pancreatitis or other digestive upsets.

Pumpkin

"Pumpkin itself is a very healthy snack," explains Dr. Richter. "Pumpkin helps with digestive health and it's great for a dog's skin and coat. Also, if feeding canned pumpkin, make sure it's just pure pumpkin puree and not the pre-spiced or sugary pie mix." And, same rule as above: keep the slab of pumpkin pie on your plate.

Avoid These Foods for Dogs

You may notice this list is longer than the one above filled with healthy options, and with good reason. Thanksgiving coincides with an uptick in emergency vet visits across the U.S. because of the extra, often unsafe "human" food that dogs end up consuming at this time of year.

Prepare for a dog-safe Holiday by taking some precautions to help you avoid something potentially unhealthy, or worse, toxic. Ensure your guests and any small children know to ask you before sharing food with your pets.

These are some of the foods that you shouldn't share with dogs due to the potential for unsafe or unhealthy ingredients:

- Turkey bones, skin, and gravy
- Stuffing
- Casseroles
- Mashed potatoes
- Creamed peas
- Chocolate, cookies, pies, and sweets (as well as anything "sugar-free" or containing xylitol, which can be fatal for dogs)
- Alcoholic beverages
- Raisins and grapes
- Onions, scallions, and garlic
- Ham
- Yeast dough
- Fatty foods
- Foods containing spices

Once the meal is over, be sure to properly secure any trash so your dog can't get into it. If your dog gets into something that they shouldn't eat, seek help right away. In the event of an emergency, contact the Pet Poison Helpline or call your local emergency vet.