



Daily Sun staff

Lollie, owned by Dotty Crain, of the Village of Bonnybrook, shows how she packs for a trip.

## Experts Offer Advice to Keep Pets Safe During the Holidays

Veterinarians and trainers provide tips on travel, food and safe decorations as the season approaches.

By KRISTI SCHWEITZER  
Daily Sun Staff Writer

The holidays are a time to dish up food, decorate the house and visit family, but with all the changes happening to your pet's environment, it's important to know what is and isn't safe.

With Thanksgiving and other holidays around the corner, now is the time to prepare your home or your holiday destination so your furry friend can also have a happy holiday.

### Travel Safety

Whether traveling by airplane or car, it's important to know what vaccinations and parasite preventions are required at the destination, said Rebecca Fratello, veterinarian of House Calls Mobile Pet Clinic.

"Some places require a health certification completed within 30 days of travel," Fratello said. "All require up-to-date rabies vaccinations, but that can mean different things in different parts of the country."

Research emergency veterinarian hospitals ahead of time in case an emergency should occur, Fratello said.

Bring enough of the pet's regular food to last the duration of the trip, Fratello said. Medication, pet beds, travel crates and toys also help make the pet feel at home.

"Familiar items, such as your pet's own bed, blankets and toys can make a big difference, as the last thing you want is for them to feel worried and upset," said Neal Kimball, owner of Good Dog Training Village.

If traveling by car, take a bowl and some water along, and provide enough stops in the journey so a dog can stretch its legs, he added.

Just as people make airplane and hotel reservations in advance, they should make sure any special pet accommodations are planned out early on, Kimball said.

"Pet-related services are busy in the holiday months, whether pet-friendly accommodations, pet-travel specialists, pet sitters, boarding kennels or other holiday-related pet activities," Kimball said. "Sort out your plans as early as possible to give yourself the widest range of options and the best value."

If traveling north to a colder climate, invest in boots for your pet who will not be acclimated to cold temperatures or slippery, salty roads, Fratello said. Jackets and sweaters aren't necessary unless the pets have to be shaved.

When visiting friends or family, make sure pets have access to a comfortable, quiet place and let them explore to get familiar with their surroundings, Kimball said.

### Holiday Food

When offering any holiday food or treats to your pet, err on the side of caution.

While chocolate alone is harmful to dogs, also avoid giving your pet any dessert with chocolate, as well, according to the American Veterinary Medical Association, as it can be poisonous.

Most baked goods and other sweets should be kept out of reach as they can be too rich for pets, and artificial sweeteners found in many baked goods has been linked to liver failure and death in dogs, according to AVMA.

Table scraps, especially anything containing onions, raisins and grapes, should be kept away from pets as they can be poisonous or hard to digest, causing pancreatitis.

Fratello said it's best to avoid giving any holiday food as treats, except for a small piece of turkey.

"I'd prefer if my clients fed nothing except their pet's regular food," Fratello said. "I'd suspect 50% of holiday vet calls are 'dietary indiscretion,' where a pet ate a food too rich, too fatty, too much seasoning, like onion powder, and caused digestive upset."

### Decorating

When getting the home ready for the festive season, pet owners should make sure dangerous decorations are out of pets' reach, according to the AVMA.

Broken ornaments can cause injuries or intestinal blockage if ingested. Tinsel and other related decorations can also cause intestinal blockages that may require surgery if ingested.

Make sure tall objects, such as Christmas trees, are secured or out of reach to pets who may want to climb them, the AVMA reports. Additionally, water additives for trees, such as aspirin or sugar, can be dangerous if there are pets in the home.

Many holiday flowers and plants such as amaryllis, mistletoe, balsam, pine, cedar and holly are poisonous to pets.

"Keeping pets away from décor is best, but not always practical," Fratello said. "Baby gates work the best."

Make sure electric lights are covered and candles are put out when humans are not home, she said.

Staff writer Kristi Schweitzer can be reached at 352-753-1119, ext. 5225, or [kristi.schweitzer@thevillagesmedia.com](mailto:kristi.schweitzer@thevillagesmedia.com).