



## Five Ways To Safely Celebrate With Your Pet This Holiday Season

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(NAPS)—Most pet parents agree: their animals are part of what makes the holiday season so magical. While it's an excellent opportunity to integrate furry family members into all the special holiday traditions and make memories together, there are a few things you should keep in mind to keep your pet safe and healthy throughout the festivities:

- **Opt for pet-friendly decorations:** Many favorite holiday decorations need to be kept out of pets' reach. Mistletoe, pine needles, ivy garland, holly, lilies and poinsettias can be toxic to pets when consumed. This is why I recommend artificial Christmas trees to those with particularly curious pets that like to chew on plants. If you don't choose an artificial tree, it's important to note that some water additives for real trees can be toxic, so you should make sure your pet can't access this water source. When decorating your tree, it's best to avoid tinsel and breakable ornaments to prevent potential hazards, and you should always secure your tree to prevent a climbing cat from tipping it over.
- **Keep pets warm and dry:** As the weather gets colder, pets may need a few extra layers to stay comfortable and safe while outdoors. Booties can help prevent a pup's paws from getting ice in them and offer protection from salt-treated walkways. At home, use pet-safe ice melt rather than salt, which can be irritating to pets' paws, mouths and stomachs. You can keep them feeling warm and looking stylish on winter adventures with sweaters and jackets such as the Reddy Black Puffer and the Reddy Colorblock Dog Sweater. A cozy handwarmer lead will help keep you warm as well while you're out and about. When you return home, always dry off their coats and paws to remove debris and ice clumps in fur and between paw pads.
- **Choose and wrap gifts wisely:** If you're one of the nearly 80% of pet parents who, according to the 2022 Petco consumer survey of 1,000 U.S. dog and cat parents, plan to include pets in holiday gifting, make sure pets only have access to and open presents while supervised so they don't ingest any paper or tape. I recommend sticking to wrapping paper for pet gifts, as ribbons, bows and accessories can be dangerous when ingested. Whether you're buying advent calendars, apparel or toys for your pet, Petco's holiday stockings offer an easy and pet-safe "wrapping" option that you



**Heed these hints for a happier holiday for you and your pet.**

can use year after year.

- **Be aware of toxic holiday foods:** Common holiday foods such as chocolate, turkey skin and bones, ham, grapes and raisins, garlic, caffeine, alcohol, onions, certain spices and sweets, especially any containing xylitol, should be avoided. For festive pet-safe foods, Petco has a variety of sweet and savory dog treats just for the holidays. If you think your pet has accidentally ingested a toxic food or other material, contact your veterinarian or the Pet Poison Helpline immediately.
- **Prioritize pet health and wellness:** Involving pets in holiday traditions can mean taking them along for a road trip, introducing them to new people or staying in unfamiliar environments—all things that can cause anxiety in pets. It's important to keep your pet's mental health top of mind during the holiday season and year-round. When possible, pets should be introduced to new people and pets in a neutral environment, individually and at their own pace. For pets that experience anxiety in the car, practicing with short drives or sitting in the car while parked, followed by treats and positive reinforcement, can help the adjustment and prepare them for a long ride. Calming products can help mitigate anxiety in pets, and you can also consult your veterinarian for anxiety or motion sickness treatments to help make travel easier. Training in advance of any holiday plans is also a good idea, and Petco offers both in-person and online training options at [stores.petco.com/training](https://petco.com/training).

### Learn More

For additional tips on how to safely celebrate the holidays with your pets, visit [petco.com/holiday](https://petco.com/holiday) and a Petco pet care center.

• *Dr. Miller is the chief veterinarian at Petco, The Health + Wellness Co. and member of the Petco Pet Wellness Council. She received her DVM and MBA degrees from Colorado State University and has been board certified in Preventive Medicine since 2018.*