

# TOGETHER FOR THE HOLIDAY SEASON

SPRINGS FAMILY VETERINARY HOSPITAL'S  
2023 WINTER NEWSLETTER



IN  
THIS  
ISSUE:

Message from Dr. Sara  
Fear Free Family Gatherings  
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# THE UNCONDITIONAL LOVE OF PETS

by Dr. Sara Ryan

Seasons Greetings to our Springs Family Vet Family,

Sometimes this time of year can be so hectic that we forget to reserve time to just slow down and be present with our loved ones. The wonderful thing about our pets is that they are always available to spend time with us. Quality time with our furry family members can provide some much needed calmness to our day and light for our spirit. Remember to slow down and love your pets this season! May you find health, happiness and peace during this holiday season and in the coming year.

Sincerely,  
Sara Ryan, VMD



"Any glimpse into the life of an animal quickens our own  
and makes it so much larger and better in every way."

~John Muir



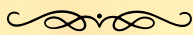
# FEAR FREE FAMILY GATHERINGS



*The winter and holiday seasons give us the perfect weather to get out of the cold and get together. Large or small gatherings, new people, places, and other pets can be a lot of change for our dogs and cats. Here are a few tips to make mingling merry:*

## *~ SEAMLESS SOCIALIZATION ~*

If your pets are traveling to a loved one's home who also have pets, consider socializing them before the event. A few meet and greets in a controlled and safe environment can make all the difference before your holiday gathering, and in the new environment the pets will find familiarity in one another.



Make introductions to new people successful by having them offer a favorite treat to your pet. Ask them to toss the treat on the floor if your pet is unwilling to approach. Alert them to any triggers that cause stress and to foods your pet shouldn't have. Lastly, watch pets and kids closely to ensure all interactions are positive!

## *~ PREPARE FOR PETS ~*

For those pets who typically are nervous this time of year, talk to us about further options that may be right for your specific pet. There are many nutraceutical options for promoting calm and reducing stress. For those who use pharmaceuticals to help, call our office for refills and visits, if necessary, at least a week or two before the event to allow for enough time to be prepared.

## *~ ROOM TO CHILL ~*

Keep in mind that many pets may need to take a break from all the stimulation and new faces. Create a safe zone where your pet can escape the commotion. A bed tucked into a quiet corner or even just leaving the door open to a quiet room can offer a comfortable getaway area. If your pets are very nervous, acclimate them to a private room beforehand, and make sure it's a place they want to go willingly. Consider adding Adaptil or Feliway pheromone spray or a plug-in diffuser to the space.

Just like the bandanas we use here at the clinic, spraying some pheromone on a cherished toy or blanket in your pet's safe zone can aid in providing reassurance. Use calming music or white noise in the space to diminish outside sounds. Provide safe, long lasting chew toys, such as a stuffed KONG for dogs. For kitty homes, arrange a room with their favorite toys, beds, scratching post, litterbox, food and water, and acclimate them to the room beforehand. Put a sign on the door of the room so children and other guests know not to enter.







# AVOIDING HOLIDAY HAZARDS



Puppies playing in the snow is the sweetest sight! Many dogs enjoy tromping around in the snow and even catching snowflakes on their tongues. While this can be flurries of fun, many owners are rightfully concerned about the potential effects of ice melt or rock salt on their pups.

Traditional rock salt can be harsh on soft paw pads and cause discomfort and irritation. Furthermore, it is also unsafe if ingested.

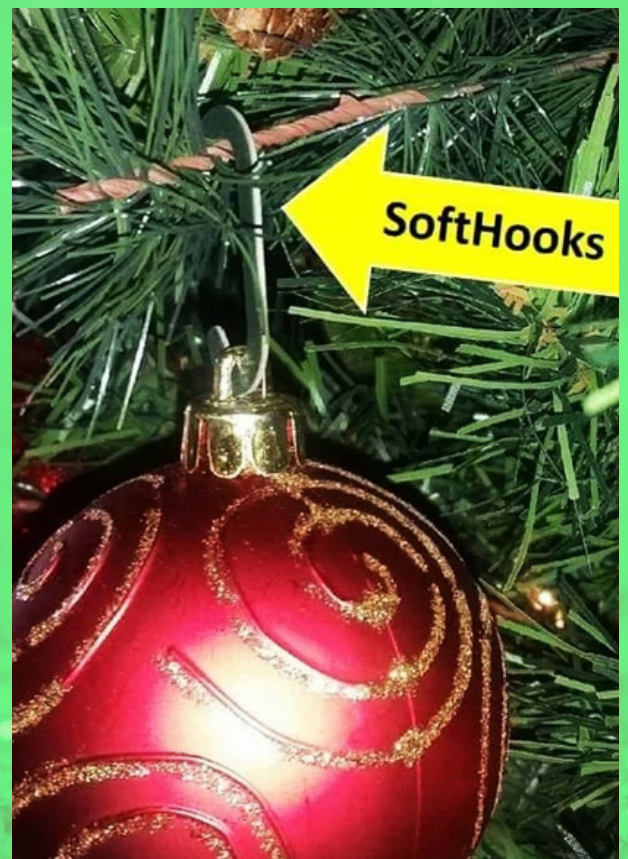
It is best to use a salt that is marked 'pet safe' but still take some precautions:



- ❄ Following a winter outing, wash your dog's paws with warm water and check for any irritation.
- ❄ Prevent your pet from eating snow or drinking from puddles that could contain ice melt.
- ❄ Consider using booties to protect delicate paws and to keep them warm.
- ❄ Store ice melt in a place your pet cannot access it.



Worried about curious cats around the Christmas tree? Cats in their playful nature may see a dangling ornament as a toy. Did you know that pet safe ornament hooks are an option? In addition to selecting plastic ornaments in lieu of glass ones, pet safe hooks can provide a little further peace of mind. Not only do they hold the ornament onto the branch more securely, but they are also made of a material that is easily broken down -- a less hazardous alternative to metal hooks that could easily end up in a cat's mouth.







# AVOIDING HOLIDAY HAZARDS



## A few more tree safety considerations.....

- ❄️ Secure your tree so it is unable to fall over on your pets (homes with climbing cats beware!)
- ❄️ Ensure your pet isn't able to access stagnant or treated water at the base of the tree.
- ❄️ Skip the tinsel! If ingested, it can cause intestinal blockage.
- ❄️ Vacuum or sweep up needles regularly, as they can cause paw irritation or GI upset if eaten.

Lilies are a very popular holiday plant but also very dangerous for our pets. Ingesting even a small amount of any part of the plant, or drinking water from the vase, can result in rapid, fatal kidney failure in cats. There are many types of lilies, and some are more dangerous to dogs than others. It's best for pet owners to keep lilies out of the home entirely, as well as research the toxicity of any plants that are gifted during the holidays before making them a part of the decor.



While it's tempting to share our holiday feast with our pets, it's important to ensure they forgo most of the fatty and rich foods with which we generally indulge. Bones can easily splinter and cause obstruction, and fatty meat or foods cooked in oil can cause pancreatitis. Many ingredients we use in holiday cooking, such as garlic and onions, are toxic to pets as well. Those of us who bake have to be extra vigilant to ensure our pets don't sample raw dough that can cause bloating and ethanol

poisoning. We should also be careful of gifted baked goods, as they may contain xylitol, raisins, nuts, or grapes, which are all toxic to pets. Plan ahead to be sure there are special pet-safe treats on hand for guests to give to pets, if allowed. And if there's time to include some extra baking in our schedules, we all know how excited our furry friends would be to receive an extra special homemade holiday treat!



# WINTER WEATHER ENRICHMENT



**C**old weather often means more indoor time, and therefore, less physical exercise for our pets. Most people can name their pet's favorite physical activities, but do you know what types of mental stimulation bring out the FUN in your pet? Mental enrichment is thought to be every bit as important as physical exercise, and it can be an energy releaser, stress reliever, boredom buster and much more! Consider some of these ideas to add mental enrichment to your pet's day (and enjoy the added bonding benefit as well!):

**C**ats:

♥ Train your kitty to navigate an indoor agility course! Cat owners may be surprised to learn that cat agility is a popular sport! <https://www.catagility.com/>

♥ Implement a variety of food puzzles to your cat's feeding schedule, but be patient while they learn to use them! <http://foodpuzzlesforcats.com/>

♥ Create an indoor kitty garden. Cats love greenery!  
<https://www.petsplusus.com/pet-information/lifestyle/how-make-purrfect-indoor-cat-garden>

♥ Heard of Nosework for Cats? It's a form of scent detection for fun, and the benefits are vast. There's even an inexpensive online class:  
<https://www.noseworkcats.com/>

♥ Explore new ways to play with your cat that taps into their natural hunting instinct:  
<https://whatyourcatwants.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Interactive-Cat-Play-2-22-2021.pdf>





# WINTER WEATHER ENRICHMENT



## Dogs:

♥ Indoor hide and seek, either with you hiding or by hiding your dog's toys for them to sniff out, provides excellent mental stimulation and fantastic fun! If your dog hasn't learned "wait" and "find it" cues, you'll need to teach them first. Both are super fun behaviors to train! See:  
<https://be.chewy.com/besmart/training/>

♥ Once your dog knows "wait," the Shell Game is great mental stimulation and fun. You can use three identical yogurt cups, let your dog see you put a treat under one, mix them up and then release your dog to choose the right cup and get the treat as a reward!

♥ Shaping Exercises and 101 Things To Do With a Box: shaping is basically breaking down a desired behavior into smaller, rewardable steps. Dogs enjoy the reinforcement that accompanies learning via this method and can learn a range of simple tricks, like high five and wave, to complex ones such as fetching a soda from the fridge! The "101" game can cumulatively provide hours of fun, banish boredom and greatly increase confidence. A good place to start is:


<https://www.akc.org/expert-advice/training/training-tips-shaping/>  
and

<https://www.clickertraining.com/101-things-to-do-with-a-box>



♥ When the temps are bearable and you and your dog are ready to get outside, create a snow scavenger hunt! Light, fluffy snow is the perfect place to make a life-sized snuffle mat right in your backyard. Hide your dog's favorite training treats in an enclosed area outdoors and have them hunt away. Or use your dog's favorite toys or some new toys for them to root around and find. 🐾





*This winter season, amidst the low temperatures and blistering wind, dogs and cats cozy up inside with their best friends and companions... ❤️*



We **love** being a part of the joy and connection our clients and patients share and are so privileged to be your pet's healthcare team! Thank you for entrusting them into our care. We promise to always give them, and you, our very best!

Wishing everyone a beautiful holiday season,  
The Doctors & Staff at Springs Family Vet

