



## Homeward Bound Golden Retriever Rescue

### Holiday Safety for your Dog

Christmas is a fun and exciting time for families, but there are some added dangers for our pets. The adored family dog tends to find his place in the center of all the excitement; therefore, we must be careful so the holiday magic will not interrupted be a tragedy. Below are some suggestions on how to ensure your dog stays safe during the holiday season.



#### The Basics

Remember to stay calm, if you feel stress during the holidays, your dog may notice your stress and may become anxious. He looks to you as a leader, so if you are calm, he will be calm. Also try to spend a little quiet time with him every day; this will help you, too.

Review your dog's basic obedience exercises daily. Do not teach him something new, but reviewing what he already knows will reinforce you as a leader and someone he can trust.

Keep your dog's regular daily routine. Feed and walk him at the same times as usual. Changing his routine can make him stressed, and he can seek attention by misbehaving. According to your dog, any attention, even if you are screaming at him, is better than no attention.

Try to play with your dog before your party. If you tire him out, he will be too tired to get into any mischief when guests arrive. If that is not possible, hire a dog walker or take him to doggie daycare.

Find out the location of the nearest emergency vet in your area today and have it on hand. Do not lose precious moments during an emergency.

#### Christmas Tree/Decorations

- If you have a fresh tree, there are some real dangers to his health. It can be more dangerous to dogs than artificial plastic trees. Pine needles are toxic and can puncture internal organs if eaten. Make sure the drink stand for the tree has plenty of water to prevent the tree drying out and losing needles. At the same time, it is important that your dog is not able to access the water, if ingested this could result in poisoning.
- Ensure the tree has a good solid base and cannot be



easily knocked over by your dog. Try not to have the tree near furniture, which the dog could use to jump onto the tree.

Packages under the tree: make sure you do not put wrapped chocolates or food under the tree! If dogs can smell it, and they can reach it, they will certainly eat it!

- Be careful when using tinsel or angel hair; place it at the top of the tree where the dog cannot reach. Tinsel can be ingested and move down to the intestines and stomach causing a blockage, which will result in emergency (and costly) surgery to remove it.
- Keep all decorations, ornaments, wire hangers, ribbons, yarn, and wrapping paper out of your dog's reach. Be careful using edible ornaments and decorations such as bread dough, popcorn, and gumdrops not only on your tree but also throughout your house; remember that this is still food to your dog, and the dough and paint you use on them can be toxic.
- Secure ornaments to the tree, and if they are breakable move those to the top so they are out of the dog's reach. Any small pieces of an ornament, either wood, paper or glass, can cause a blockage in your dog's intestines. This could result in severe pain, emergency surgery or even death in some cases. Watch your dog carefully.
- When no one is home, unplug the Christmas lights. If your dog tends to chew and may chew an exposed wire, you may want to try applying a dog repellent, such as bitter apple. Another option is to purchase casing from a hardware store and wrap the exposed wires to deter your dog from chewing.
- Artificial snow is toxic to dogs, so it is best to avoid it altogether.
- Candles are especially popular over the holiday season, be careful to make sure your dog cannot get close to lit candles. They could inadvertently knock over candles with their tail and start a fire or be burned.

*Please note: it may be cute, but it is dangerous to decorate your dog with ribbons and lights, etc.*

## Plants

Holly leaves and berries, mistletoe, poinsettias, ivy, and Christmas cactus are all popular plants to have in the home at the holiday season, however, these plants are toxic to dogs so should be placed where your dog cannot reach them. **The**

**phone numbers for the National Poison Control Center are 888-426-4435 and 900- 680-0000**



## Holiday Food, Sweets and Chocolate

Many dog owners enjoy giving their dog the occasional treat of "human" food and typically, this does not harm the dog. However, it is important to remember that some foods that are fine for humans to eat can be toxic to dogs. The odd sliver of chicken or turkey (off the bone) is fine; however, a large amount of this food can lead to gastrointestinal problems.



Never give your dog any cooked chicken or turkey bones, these bones are small and can splinter, and become lodged in your dog's throat or puncture the intestines and stomach. Chocolate is toxic to dogs, the darker the chocolate, the more poisonous. Chocolate contains both caffeine and theobromine, which can be lethal to dogs. If you suspect your dog has eaten chocolate watch for signs of restlessness and vomiting. If in doubt, see your veterinarian immediately.

## Kitchen Safety

- Tin foil, meat strings, and toothpicks can cause serious problems. If dropped on the floor, they may become lodged in his throat or puncture internal organs.
- Cookie or bread dough can expand in the stomach and cause severe problems if swallowed.
- Chocolate, coffee, and tea are very toxic for dogs. Even small amounts can cause diarrhea, seizures or death. Unsweetened baking chocolate and dark chocolate are most dangerous.
- Bones, cooked or uncooked, can tear or obstruct the digestive system.
- Sweets and greasy or spicy foods can cause pancreatitis, which is a serious inflammation of the pancreas and can be fatal.
- Alcoholic beverages are attractive to some dogs, especially sweet alcoholic beverages such as eggnog. Remind guests to keep glasses out of reach of the dog and put away glasses after parties. A small amount of alcohol can be fatal.
- Plastic wrapping can obstruct the digestive system and cause severe problems if swallowed.
- If you are serving a roast or turkey and it is covered in a mesh material that is soaked with the juices from the meat, remember that your dog could eat the mesh and it can cause his intestines to twist; he can get **bloat** where his stomach swells up like a balloon. If this happens, get him to a veterinarian immediately. Bloat is 100% fatal without veterinary intervention. Do not wait to see if he gets better by morning, this is an urgent situation!

If you bake or cook and leave things out to cool, put them out of reach on the countertops. If he steals food off countertops, try to deter him by putting double stick tape on the front and top of the counter so that when he puts his feet up, the tape will stick to the hair on his feet. Another



option is to buy clear vinyl carpet runners and place them with the prong sides up along the countertops. These deterrents may not work, so the best solution is not to let him in the kitchen at all.

Be careful and put all garbage in cans that have dog-proof lids, or are behind locked doors. If left alone, dogs are notorious for scavenging through the garbage, so be aware and dispose of the turkey carcass (raw or cooked) where it is out of reach. Turkey and chicken bones are small and can splinter, which is hazardous to your dogs health.

### Visitors

Some dogs love human attention and visitors are very exciting, however, other dogs find strangers in their house stressful. The holidays are often a busy time with visitors coming and going, so be aware of your dog's stress level. If you know your dog is not comfortable or may charge the door, jump on guests, etc. put him in another room. If your dog is fearful, give your dog the option of a quiet place to escape to should the need arise; this is particularly important if your friends and relatives have young children.

When company comes over, always know where your dog is at all times, and supervise if children are playing with your dog. Even if your dog is good with children and has never bitten, the added stress may be just enough for that first bite. Be especially careful opening your front door when you are greeting guests and with delivery people so your dog does not dash out. Put him on a leash when you open the door. Make sure he is wearing identification tags at all times.

This is also important if he is in the back yard during New Year's Eve celebrations. The sound of fireworks may scare him, and he can jump the fence out of fear and run over by a car. Please keep your dog inside to **prevent** this from happening. Include your dog in the festivities, but be aware of where he is and let him have an escape route to a quiet place if he needs one.

Ask your guests not to feed your dog or let him drink any of their drinks. Tell them that he has been sick and we must be very careful what he eats. Even a small amount of alcohol can put your dog in a coma. A drunken dog is not funny. Do you want to spend your holiday cleaning up



after your dog or taking him to the emergency vet? If your guests absolutely must feed him something, give them some dog treats to give your dog.

Ask **smokers** to be especially careful. Unintentional hand gestures with a cigarette could have disastrous results; such as the dog lunging at the cigarette. Alternatively, they may be talking and forget to flick the ashes off their cigarette, and the hot ash may fall on your dog and burn him. In addition, second-hand

smoke is just as unhealthy for pets as it is for humans.

### **Vacation During the Holidays**

If you are going away during the holiday season, you have several options to keep your dog safe. You may choose to put your dog in a boarding kennel while you are gone. It is best to check out the premises prior to taking your dog there so you can ensure the kennel meets your standards. Any reputable boarding kennel will insist your dog is up to date on his vaccinations, and this is equally important for the well-being of your dog and all other dogs boarding.

There are a growing number of reputable pet sitters available today. They will come over once or twice a day to feed and play with your dog(s). Some pet sitters are also house sitters; they will stay overnight to watch your house as well as your pets. Of course, you may want to consider asking a friend or relative to house sit. Whichever option you use, make sure you leave your contact information along with your veterinarian's telephone number in case of an emergency.

### **Toys**

When buying toys for your dog, make sure you thoroughly check them first. Similar precautions should be taken with your dog's toys as you would take buying a toy for a young child. Make sure there is nothing small and glued on that the dog can pull off and swallow. Since the toy will likely be chewed upon, ensure that it is made from a non-toxic substance. Any toy that is small enough for your dog to swallow is dangerous.

Many pet supply stores sell large dog toys made with non-toxic materials.

### **Outdoor Safety Tips**

- Antifreeze tastes sweet and many dogs are attracted to it. Just a few drops can be fatal.
- Hypothermia can pose a danger during severe cold. Puppies, old dogs, and sick dogs are most vulnerable. Dress your dog in winter clothing or restrict outdoor time.

Provide snug shelter. Warm your dog quickly if he starts to shiver.

- Ice-melting chemicals and salt can irritate paws or cause digestive upsets if swallowed. Booties help protect sensitive paws.

The holidays are a special time, and we wish you a safe and wonderful holiday season!



Sources:

Suite101: Holiday Safety

Doggy Manners, Los Angeles CA

