



Grafton Dog Obedience Club Inc.

KEEPING YOUR PET SAFE AT CHRISTMAS

Sadly, for many dogs and other pets, Christmas isn't the joyous occasion it is for us. At this time of year many pets are dumped by owners who don't care enough to have them looked after while they are away on holidays. Many of these frightened, abandoned pets are either killed, injured or left to starve as they attempt to fend for themselves. Most of those that find their way to pounds and animal shelters end up being put down as pounds and shelters struggle to manage the annual pre-Christmas influx of "throw away" pets.

Pounds and shelters will experience another surge in numbers early in the New Year when many people dispose of pets given to them as unwanted Christmas presents. So please, please don't give a pet as a Christmas present without first making sure the person you are giving the pet to really wants that pet.

If you are going on holidays and leaving your pet to be cared for by a neighbour or friend, please make sure that person takes the responsibility of caring for your pet seriously. Many pets go missing while their owners are on holidays because they were bored and lonely and escaped from their yard looking for company.

Arrange for the person who will be caring for your pet to walk your dog each day, or to spend some time playing with your pet to relieve boredom and loneliness. Provide your pet with environment enrichment to keep them occupied while spending extra time alone. In our hot climate there should always be at least 2 containers of cool water available in case one gets spilt or knocked over and ask the person who is caring for your pet to check this each day when they feed your pet.

Make sure your pet is microchipped, registered and wearing a collar with your contact details. That way if your pet does go missing, he or she can be returned to you. Leave your holiday contact details with the person who is caring for your pet in case of emergency.

Avoid leaving your pet in the car while you go shopping, etc. A locked car can heat up to over 50°C and kill your pet within minutes. If travelling with your pet, stop every 2 hours for your pet to stretch his or her legs and go to the toilet and remember to offer a drink of cool water at each stop. Better still, there are non spill water bowls available for travelling so your dog will always have fresh water available in your vehicle.

Finally, avoid giving your pet too many human treats over Christmas - too much fat (pork crackling, etc.) and other unaccustomed treats can upset your pet's digestive system and chocolate can be poisonous (unless it is chocolate specially made for dogs).

With a few precautions, your pet can enjoy the holiday season too.

Carole Bryant©