

Dog Etiquette for the Holidays

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Planning to take your pet along when you go to see friends or relatives this season? Think again. Not every hostess – or pet, for that matter – can deal with a holiday visit.

Reasons to Leave Them Home

⌚ First off, many animals don't enjoy being away from a familiar home, and they really don't look forward to playing with your cousin's pet. In fact, your cat, your dog and your budgie don't know or care that it's one holiday or another.

⌚ Some of the things we humans look forward to all year are nothing but a nuisance for many animals. A crush of family and friends may annoy them, and they can turn snappy. Rich holiday foods can make them sick. Decorations can pose health threats. Dogs may chew at electrical wires and ribbons can get caught in an animal's throat. And certain plants, like mistletoe, are dangerous to dogs.

⌚ Another reason to leave the dog home is the sensibility of your host or hostess. Some hosts may shrug off a nervous pet's accident on the carpet, and your holiday visit may work out just fine. Some people, though, have allergies or animal phobias – which aren't so easy to ignore. Others usually seem easygoing but, confronted with holiday entertaining, turn into meticulous control freaks, easily rattled by an animal's unpredictable ways.

Preparing for a Visit

It goes without saying that all visiting pets must be well trained. If your dog tends to have accidents when he's nervous, if your dog won't stop begging or howls at all hours of the night, do everyone a favor and leave them home.

Before you make your plans, have a straightforward talk with your host and ask the right questions. Even if your host agrees to put your dog up for a night or two, find out how he, his partner and his kids really feel about animals. Are the children of the house afraid of

them? Does the family know what to expect from a four-legged visitor? If they have pets of their own, how do their animals get along with others? Is the host willing to pet-proof his house? Making a place pet-friendly is difficult at any time of year, but more so at holidays, when traditional decorations can become an issue. Ingested tinsel or broken tree ornaments make for medical emergencies.

⌚ Never arrive with an unannounced pet – even if you think your visit worked out fine last year. What you remember and what your host recalls may differ diametrically.

⌚ Be sure there is a quiet place where your pet can be alone. If the unexpected happens – their kids scare your pet; their pet threatens yours – it's not sufficient to confine your pet in a crate in a bustling room. It's best if there is an extra room where you and your pet can stay together, and where the crate or carrier can be placed for your pet's peace of mind.