

Handling Your Pet During the Holidays

The holidays tend to be a hectic time for everyone. Your dog can feed off your excitement, activity and stress level causing unwanted behavior. A very common issue is exuberance when company arrives, e.g. barking, rushing the door, jumping and play biting.

Be sensitive to the fact that some people are uncomfortable, fearful or just don't like dogs in general. With a multi-dog household people can feel overwhelmed; large dogs can knock people around, small dogs can get underfoot. All can result in injury, dirty or damaged clothing and cause packages or food to be dropped.

The best approach is to take control of your dog(s) before you open the door to let your guests in. Various options are:

1. Train your dog to SIT or STAY patiently near the door while leaving enough room for people to comfortably step in. Once they have and the dog is fairly calm, release your pet to greet your guests.
2. If your dog isn't trained, use a leash to control them while answering the door so that you can control any problems that may arise. Alternately, enlist help from a friend or family member to handle the leash if you need to assist your visitors.
3. In some cases it may be best to manage the situation by simply putting your dog away in their crate, kennel or another room prior to the arrival of your guests until the initial excitement subsides.

Keep in mind the reward for the dog is that people come in and give them the attention they want. Start practicing early or consider hiring a professional to train your dog in time for the holidays.