



5 Simple Tips to Manage Your Pet's Holiday Stress (without losing your mind!)

Taking a little time to plan and accommodate for our pets' needs can definitely result in a less-stressed pet – and that means a more peaceful you, as well! (Hey, we've got your back!) Here are a few simple tips to try:

- **Stick to the routine.** One simple but key tactic for maintaining domestic bliss with our fur-family is to stick to the routine. If your pet is accustomed to eating first thing in the morning when you get up or getting a long walk when you get home from work, do your best to stay with that routine. Not only does that help you make sure that no important task is overlooked, but that sense of consistency in routine keeps your pet feeling calm since they know just what to expect.
- **Get some exercise.** Given all the other stresses you have in your life right now, we are NOT recommending you start your new, all-in workout plan with your pet. BUT - strategically timed walks and playtimes for ALL of our four-legged companions can result in more calm times for you, too. While it might be tempting to cut a chilly walk short or cut down on interactive time with your kitty so you can squeeze in just one more task, keeping this time consistent is good for your pet. Since time with our pets has also been shown to relieve human stress, you may find you feel a little calmer as well.
- **Keep them entertained.** If you haven't tried food-based or other interactive puzzle games yet for your pet, this could be a wonderful time of year to do so. Snuffle mats, stuffable toys and fun feeders can all be great ways to keep bored or energetic dogs busy while guests are arriving or if you must be away for an extended period. (Do be sure to keep pets safe though and make sure your dog isn't going to destroy a toy they might get hurt on while you're gone!) Another option is to try hiding a few treats around the house for an inquisitive kitty, or consider pulling a previously-stuffed bone out of the freezer during family mealtimes to keep inquisitive, treat-begging pets away from the table. (These tactics can also be great for keeping cabin fever at bay as temperatures drop and your pet may not be able to spend as much time outside!)
- **Shower them with attention.** Plenty of attention will help keep a pet from acting out at any time of year. Grooming your pets (if they enjoy that), massages, snuggling together or even a bit of clicker training can all help your pet feel calmer and less stressed. Does your pet like people? If so, you might consider encouraging guests to interact with them too – although always be sure to supervise interactions between pets and children.
- **Finally, know your limits.** If you know that the time leading up to a family event is going to be too stressful for you to manage consistently without losing your mind, then consider enlisting a helping hand in the form of a pet tender, dog walker, doggy daycare or a stay for a night or two at a boarding facility. Holiday schedules can be hectic to manage and having extra hands available to assist you means you won't have to worry about your pet being stressed or neglected over the holidays.

Keep in mind that while these are a few simple tips you can implement immediately, there are many more tips available out there! If you're looking for more ideas, don't hesitate to reach out to your favorite veterinarian, doggy day care or other provider for even more information!