

Don't Let the Fur Fly Over This Holiday Season!

With the holiday season approaching, families and their pets will be coming together to celebrate. This should be a joyous time for all involved, but sometimes our pets don't share in that joy. Changes in their routine, by traveling and being thrust into environments with new people and pets, can be very unsettling. Avoid an emergency trip to the veterinarian over the holidays due to a dog or cat fight by taking some measures to help your pet cope with this holiday excitement.

Many dogs become nervous and anxious when they are introduced to new people and pets. Once anxious, they can react in unexpected ways. They may become more protective of their owner or toys. They may feel threatened if kids are running around or by loud noises. Perhaps most often, dogs will fight and bite over food. For these reasons, it is important to take measures for your dog to avoid these situations.

All dogs should be fed separately from each other and should be kept away from the dinner table. Overly anxious dogs should be given a quiet and familiar place to relax, such as their dog kennel or put in a room with their own blankets and toys. It is also good to know how to read your dog's body language. A dog play session can sometimes escalate to fighting. This is more likely to occur when more than 2 dogs are involved. When dogs are playing, they tend to bow toward each other frequently, with tails wagging. Their movements are flowing with each dog taking turns being on top of each other and their mouths tend to stay open with play bites. When play turns too aggressive, their postures and their tail become stiff and the hair on their back can rise. Their bites become harder and break the skin. If you know your dog becomes anxious around other dogs and people, speak with your veterinarian, before the holidays, about anti-anxiety medication for your pet and other options, such as boarding your dog.

Cats do not like to travel and are not comfortable in new environments. It is best to leave your cat at home with a pet sitter if you are traveling for the holidays. If the festivities are in your home, providing a quiet room for your cat, with his or her litter box and food in the same room, would be ideal.

Redirected aggression is a common scenario between cats who become scared. When a loud noise, sudden movement or sight of an unknown animal provokes a cat, he or she may immediately turn and attack the closest animal to it. This may be a person or your other household cat. The attack could be severe. For this reason, it is best to keep cats separated when they are nervous. Cats can also attack each other if they smell different than before, so if you take one cat on a trip and not another, when they come back together, it is common for them to act like strangers toward each other.

Keep your holiday season a fun and safe time for everyone in your family, including your pets. If you have additional questions about how to do this, please speak with your veterinarian.