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SITS & WIGGLES

The Newsletter of the Animal Clinic of Chardon



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New Year's Eve*

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HOW TO HAVE A DOG-FRIENDLY NEW YEAR'S EVE

New Year's Eve is a time for celebrating the close of another year and the end of our holiday celebrations. Since your dog is part of the family, you'll probably want to include them in your celebrations, too.

Whether you're planning on hosting a party, heading out for a night on the town, or enjoying a quiet night in, your dog will love to celebrate with a special treat on New Year's Eve. If you're hosting a party or enjoying a night at home, you can take simple steps to keep your dog safe and happy.

Food and drinks. With all of the festive food and drinks available on New Year's Eve, you (or your guests) may want to share some with your dog. (Continued on next page)



HOW TO HAVE A DOG-FRIENDLY NEW YEAR'S EVE (CONT)

However, celebratory food often has ingredients that aren't safe for dogs, which can cause digestive upset, poisoning, or other serious health problems. In addition to treats made specifically for dogs, you can stick to whole, fresh foods like carrots, canned pumpkin, or boneless, skinless (and unseasoned) chicken. And keep them away from alcoholic beverages!

Decorations. Streamers, balloons, and ribbons are commonly used for New Year's Eve decorating. Be careful to keep these decorations out of reach of your dog, as they can cause problems like digestive obstruction, which could leave you ringing in the New Year at the animal ER. The loud noise associated with popping a balloon can also frighten your dog and may cause noise aversion.

Doorbells and people. When the doorbell rings or someone knocks on your dog, does your dog run and bark in excitement or nervousness? With people coming and going through the front door, you don't want your dog to run off. Keep them in a room away from the door to make sure they stay safe inside.

Loud music. Loud music and the celebrating that accompanies it can be stressful for your dog. If they aren't used to it, make sure your dog has a quiet place to retreat to, away from the music and people.

Fireworks. Loud pops and flashes of light can be scary for your dog, especially if you're not home. If you're planning to spend New Year's Eve away from your home, create a comfortable space away from doors and windows where your dog can relax. If you're planning on staying home, you can mask the noise of fireworks with some white noise or maybe even an action movie. If you know your dog is scared of fireworks or other loud noises, it's a good idea to chat with your veterinarian about a medication to help provide them with more immediate relief from their noise aversion symptoms.



Not all dogs are party animals. For those that don't like the excitement that comes along with a party (or the noise that comes with it), a little preparation can make sure that your dog has a fun, safe, and happy New Year. Written by Dr. Sharon Campbell

5 TIPS FOR INTRODUCING A KITTEN TO ADULT CATS

There's nothing like the fresh new energy of a kitten coming into your home! If you normally adopt adult cats, adding a kitten can be a real adventure and can bring a sense of play and joy into your household. If you already have several cats in your household, you'll want to make sure the introduction is as stress-free and smooth as possible—for your kitten, the other household cats, and yourself.

Slow and Easy

This is always a good rule for any cat introductions. In the case of a kitten, you also have safety to consider since kittens are small and could easily hurt themselves in a new home or among larger, unknown cats. Isolate the kitten in a small room free of dangers and free of places to fall. When we brought our new kitten home last November, the only available room was a bedroom, but I put the mattress on the floor so there was no chance the kitten could take a tumble off the bed. Kittens need time to develop their coordination and learn to leap and fall gracefully. (Continued on next page)

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5 TIPS FOR INTRODUCING A KITTEN TO ADULT CATS (CONT)

Provide stimulation in the form of safe cat toys and your own presence. This will help you to bond with your kitten and get him used to you and to appropriate play). Of course, provide for his needs with a litter box he can easily get in and out of, scratching post, hiding spots, food, and water.

Every cat introduction is different. In a multi-cat household, variables include several different cat personalities. I tried to make time for my kitten to slowly get to know each cat, one at a time. I didn't introduce the kitten to all five cats all at once, but arranged it so the kitten could meet one or two cats at a time. Over the course of a few months, I was often pleasantly surprised by what transpired.

As with all introductions, go slow. Let them first become aware of each other by scent traveling beneath a door, if that is possible. Then I might put the kitten in a room, safely inside a carrier, and let one or two of the other cats briefly check him out. I return the kitten to his room if any of the cats start getting riled up.

Watch your kitten and cats for signs that they're ready to spend more time together. A sociable kitten, like mine, will let you know that he's anxious for more cat company and ready to move on from being alone in a room all the time. Assuming he has been vetted medically and can safely be with your other cats, keep progressing with introductions.

Empty Mind, Beginner's Mind

When I bought the kitten home, I was sure that two of my five cats were going to be a problem. I feared they would maim or kill the kitten. These were unfounded assumptions, but be ready for anything. In one case, the kitten and an adult cat (formerly feral) proved to be great buddies. They play all the time, and the adult had all the patience in the world for the kitten's boundless energy.

Let Teaching Happen

There's nothing more beautiful than watching older cats teach a kitten how to behave. Kittens have lots of energy to burn off, and if your older cats are well behaved and secure, they'll teach your kitten what's right and wrong.

My kitten lost his mother right away, so he never had the initial teachings of appropriate behavior from mom. But my adult cats stepped up to the task. They patiently put up with his endless playing, engaged in wrestling, and let the kitten know when enough was enough. They taught appropriate behavior, appropriate play, and how to ease off on the biting. My kitten has learned not to bite and now knows that it's okay to roughhouse with some of the cats but not with humans. Help out this kind of training by not encouraging your kitten in those types of behavior with you and taking away the stimulus (your hand or your finger, for example) and providing an appropriate toy.

Escape Plans in Place

Your cats will need a place to escape when the kitten becomes too much for them. Depending on how small the kitten is, this might be stairs, vertical space, a counter, or even another room. Give your older cats a break when the kitten becomes too much for them. Give the kitten a place to escape as well if he faces aggressive behavior from other cats.

Spread the Love

Introductions and acceptance of the newcomer go more smoothly if the other cats aren't feeling supplanted or neglected. Make sure all your cats get the attention they love and need during this time. In my household, one cat loves brushing. Another loves to be held and to ride shoulders. Nurture your bond with each cat, while developing the new and growing bond with your kitten. You are setting the stage for many years of joy. Written by Catherine Holm



**Dogs are not
our whole life,
but they make
our lives whole
- Roger Caras**

ACOC Birthdays

Allie 1/24

