

# Newsletter – Winter '07



Dear friends,

As the dark nights set in and temperatures drop, many of us just want to stay under our duvet; so read our article on ideas for **entertaining and exercising** your dog away from the cold and in the comfort of your home.

With Christmas just around the corner, our homes can feel like Piccadilly Circus and with all the celebrations our pets can also be affected. Check out our article on how to ensure your **pet survives Christmas**.

And don't forget you can pick up some great pet products by checking out our range online [www.walk-the-dog.net](http://www.walk-the-dog.net) but be quick as they're selling fast!

We wish you all a great Christmas and a very happy New Year!  
Hanne

## New faces to Walk the Dog...

I'd like to give a warm welcome to our new clients: Lola & Harry, Callie & Remy, Emma & Chloe, Lola & Rocky, Bozzy & Ollie, Evie, Casper, Pomme, Pee Wee, Diesel, Rosie, Bella and Rocky. Check out our picture gallery online to see our new faces.

If your pet isn't online yet, please do send us their picture so they can join our animal hall of fame.

Email pictures to: [info@walk-the-dog.net](mailto:info@walk-the-dog.net)

## Recommended reading

"Think Pet!" by Sara Whittaker – an insight into what makes your pet tick, what drives behavioural problems and gives practical advice.

## How to ensure your pet survives Christmas!

Christmas can be a hectic time for many households and for many veterinary surgeries too, as our pets can get themselves into a pickle! Below are some hints and tips to help ensure your pet has a happy and safe Christmas.

### Christmas trees, decorations and lights...

Christmas trees are especially interesting to young puppies and kittens, the bright lights and the ornaments are often too hard to resist. Cats can climb up the trunk of the tree and when they get to the top, the tree can tip and come crashing down. As pets get older, they tend to leave the tree alone, but if you have young pets, we'd suggest you put the tree in a room your pet won't have access to when unsupervised. If this isn't practical, then either place the tree onto a raised surface or put the tree in a playpen, alternatively put expandable baby fences around the tree. Beware of Christmas lights – cats, dogs and house rabbits etc, like to chew on cords. One way to stop them from doing that is to apply some **Bitter Apple spray** (available online or from pet shops) on the cord. Animals hate the way it tastes - if you can't find any Bitter Apple, Tabasco sauce works equally as well.

Some Christmas decorations especially tinsel are dangerous to pets because they can contain lead which can make your pet very sick if they eat it. Because it's shiny, pets are attracted to it - it moves and they want to "get it". Once they have it, they'll do what comes naturally to them and that's to eat it! So prevention is better than cure – keep your tree tinsel free.

### Christmas treats...

Most of us tend to over indulge at Christmas with food and sweets. Pets are always better off having pet food, but once in a while, most of us give our pet a bit of a human food as a treat. One human food that pets should never have is chocolate. Chocolate contains a substance called xanthines. It's harmless to humans, but pets don't have the ability in their bodies to break it down like we do. A sign of an animal reacting to chocolate is that they become excitable, restless and have muscle tremors. They may have difficulty in breathing and have a fit. Always keep any chocolate out of your pet's reach.

### Deck the halls with...

Mistletoe, holly, and poinsettia plants decorate our homes during the holidays. But these are **poisonous** plants if your pet eats them. Also, some people use aspirin as a preservative in Christmas tree water, but this can be fatal to cats that drink it! And finally, don't let dogs drink from puddles - at this time of year many people put anti-freeze in their cars. This tastes sweet to dogs, but is deadly.

## Entertaining play

While walking your dog gives them exercise, you never see a wild dog taking one of its pack members for a walk – instead they play! Playing with our pet increases our bond with them, helps your dog learn and be more responsive to you. While a game of fetch or a tummy rub may feel like adequate stimulation to us, our dogs are capable of so much more. Below are ways in which you can have fun with your dog, and help him or her to be a ‘Caninestein’!

### 1. What can is it under?

Wash out three tin cans and get a handful of treats. Rub all three cans with the treat. (If you don't your dog will simply follow his super-sensitive nose to the correct can). Sit opposite your dog and tell him to "stay". Show him the treat in your hand. Put it under one of the cans and repeat your stay request. Mix the cans around as your dog watches. Stop moving the cans and say "get it". Your dog will topple all the cans trying to find the magic one!

### 2. Hide and seek

Put your dog on a 'sit-stay' or get someone to hold him in one room. Allow him to see you have treats with you. Hide from him in a closet, shower, behind a door, under the bed – anywhere. Once you are situated, call him. He will have to search throughout the house to find you. If he seems lost, call his name quietly from time to time. Once he finds you, act happy, give him a treat and praise.

### 3. Dog races

Take a small saucer and place it in a room or somewhere in the garden. (The saucer makes the treat easier to see). With your dog on the lead, take him to the plate and put a treat on it, but don't let him eat it. Lead the dog away from the treat. When you stop, ask him to sit. (The first few times you do this, keep your dog on the lead). In an excited way, say "get the treat" and run with your dog to the treat. Make sure you win sometimes, to keep the game challenging!

### 4. Hunt the treat

With a handful of treats, take your dog into a room. Have someone hold the dog while you place treats hidden around the rooms. Once you're finished, let him go and say "go seek" or "find them". If he needs help, lead him to ones he's missed. Praise him when he gets it right.

### 5. Uncover me!

Have someone hold your dog or get him to 'sit'. Grab a treat, lie on the floor and put a blanket over yourself. Make sure you protect your face with your hands. Call your dog - he will naturally want to get to you. If he struggles to get the blanket off you, keep calling him. Once he reveals you, reward him with the treat and praise.

All these games test your dog's problem solving ability, memory, language comprehension and learning ability.

## Our dogs in the news...



Congratulations to our client Harley, who came 1st and 2nd in the scooter category at the Alaskan Malamute Working Associations October race weekend. It was Harley's first ever competition and he's been training for just a year. Harley will be competing in the British Siberian Husky Racing Association Championship later this month on the Yorkshire Moors. Good luck!

**THE GREAT FHM  
DOG-OFF!**  
Our search for the nation's  
finest hound continues...

Meanwhile, Howard (Hanne's Basset Hound) is featured in December's issue of FHM. The magazine is running a competition for the nation's best dog – personality and looks are key criteria. In true lad's mag tradition, Howard was picked for his habit of pinching Hanne's underwear! Fingers crossed Howard will be the nation's top dog.

## New team member...

Walk the Dog has a new team member happy to help out with dog walking, pet feeding and visiting.

**Sue** has kept animals all her life ranging from dogs and rabbits to ferrets and a goat! Sue has over 15 years experience of handling and caring for trained police dogs. Sue will be covering mainly Berkhamsted, Hemel Hempstead and surrounding areas.

Meanwhile, our team member Leigh has decided to head for pastures new. We wish her well in her new role in the hotel industry.

## Recipe corner

Mince Surprise – a great Christmas treat for cats



- 1 cup mince meat
- 3 tablespoons rice
- 1 tablespoon gravy

### Instructions...

Fry the mince meat for 15 minutes or until it is darkened. Add a little water to ensure the mince does not stick to the pan. Add the rice along with another spoon of water depending on how soupy you want the meal to be. Stir in the gravy. Remove from heat and let it cool, then serve. Diced chicken may be substituted in place of minced meat.