

# Press Release



Contact: Laura Fulda  
VP, Marketing & Communications  
Humane Society Silicon Valley  
(408) 727-3383 ext. 854  
(408) 202-6174  
[laura.fulda@hssv.org](mailto:laura.fulda@hssv.org)

## **Humane Society Silicon Valley Offers Holiday Pet Tips** *Donations of Blankets, Towels & Beds Needed for Shelter Animals*



**SANTA CLARA, Calif., Dec. 3, 2007** – The holidays can be a wonderful time of the year, but they can quickly become troublesome if your dog gets into the holiday chocolates and becomes ill or your cat climbs the Christmas tree and cuts itself on an ornament. Beth Ward, vice president of customer and animal care at Humane Society Silicon Valley (HSSV), offers tips on how to keep pets safe during the holidays and some dos and don'ts on giving pets as gifts.

To begin with, Ward says pet owners should never leave their pet home alone with a real Christmas tree with breakable ornaments.

"Cats may want to climb the tree and dogs may be inspired to use it as a fire hydrant," Ward explained. "We recommend an artificial tree with soft needles. Real trees needles can lodge themselves in between your pet's paw pads or get caught in your pet's nostrils. Also, with an artificial tree there's no tree water so your pet won't drink it and become ill."

Ward also recommends the following:

- **Avoid using tinsel.** It's surprisingly sharp and can cut through your animal's intestines if swallowed.
- **Tape tree light cords to the wall and across the floor** so dogs and cats don't chew through them and get burned or electrocuted.
- **Keep in mind that holiday plants such as mistletoe, holly and English ivy and even Poinsettias** are poisonous to pets.
- **Remember that many ornaments can be fatal if swallowed.**
- **Candles can be hazardous.** Flame or dripping wax can burn dogs or singe their whiskers or hair. And, they're a fire hazard if your cat/dog knocks them over.

### **Safe Holiday Toys/Snacks**

"In terms of toys, the larger the better," Ward says. "Get a large toy so your pet won't be in danger of ingesting the toy. Rope, fabric and soft squeak toys are good choices. However, they should be used under supervision because if left alone, the dog can chew off bits of plastic or fabric and ingest it, leading to serious intestinal problems." For cats, fresh catnip, size appropriate balls and kitty kongs are good choices.

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As for holiday snacks, Ward says it's best to resist the urge to feed your pet table scraps. "Chicken and steak bones can splinter and perforate the stomach or other internal organs. Over indulging in holiday goodies can cause diarrhea and intestinal upsets." And, while you may love to munch on those chocolate candies from Aunt Betsy, chocolate can be harmful, even toxic to dogs and cats. Ward recommends having some of your pets favorite pet treats on hand for them to enjoy instead.

Frequent visits from friends and family are commonplace during the holidays. However, Ward says pets that are easily frightened or excited, should be kept in a separate, quiet room away from the festivities. Also, with guests coming and going, an unattended open door allows dogs and cats outside where they may be exposed to passing cars.

Ward says dogs and cats are social animals that crave human companionship. "Make sure you set aside enough time to spend with your animal companion this holiday season," Ward says. "It is after all, a traditional time to spend time with loved ones, and that includes your pets."

### **Pet Gift Giving Etiquette**

Not every gift should be a surprise, especially a pet. Ward says while a bow-bearing puppy or kitten under the holiday tree may look adorable, there are better ways to introduce a loved one to a new best friend.

Ward says all too often, people who receive pets as surprise gifts end up giving them away. "Pets become members of the family, and choosing to share your life with an animal companion requires careful consideration," Ward explained. "If you want to bring a pet into a loved one's life, surprise your loved one with a shelter adoption certificate, or wrap up some pet supplies like a litter box, collar and toys. Then arrange for the two of you to visit your local animal shelter so your loved one can find the pet of his or her dreams."

### **Donations Needed**

Ward says with the colder weather, the shelter animals need lots of blankets, towels and soft beds to keep warm. Donations are welcome and can be dropped off at HSSV, located at 2530 Lafayette Street in Santa Clara.

### **About Humane Society Silicon Valley**

Humane Society Silicon Valley (HSSV) is an independent, non-profit agency offering quality adoptions, medical care and education programs to enhance the human-animal bond. Established in 1929, HSSV has served Silicon Valley for 78 years adopted more than 500,000 animals into permanent, loving homes. HSSV is an "open door" shelter and accepts animals 24-hours a day, seven days a week, regardless of any temperament or health related problems. HSSV's medical center offers affordable spaying/neutering, vaccinations and microchips to the public. More information about HSSV can be found at our website at [www.hssv.org](http://www.hssv.org).

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