

FEELING FRAZZLED

IN THE RUN UP TO THE FESTIVE SEASON?

Here's the Blacks Vets guide to keeping you and your pets relaxed during the busiest time of year.



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November and December can be the most chaotic months of the year as we try to cram in bonfire parties, Christmas shopping, school plays and tree decorating.

It can be a really stressful time of year for our pets too with changes to routine, extra visitors and the sights, sounds and smells that come with the festive season. Luckily, we're here with some top tips for keeping your pets calm and you one step ahead with their care. After all, happy pets make for happy owners!

Firework Phobia

Let's start with an obvious one; the dreaded firework season. For many pets this is a truly traumatic time which makes for a horrible experience for pet owners too. As the period can last from Halloween to New Year, it can also be a time of sustained stress over a number of months. A study published in 2015 conducted by a Norwegian research team found that the sound of fireworks produced more stress reactions in dogs than either the sound of thunderstorms or gunshots! With around 40% of dogs thought to be affected, it is good to know that there are things you can do to help soothe your pet. Allowing your dog to become accustomed to

the noise in a controlled environment can be very helpful in reducing the instinctive fear reaction they have. Play a recording of fireworks at very low volume when the house is calm and you are doing something that your pet likes, such as playing or feeding. Each day, play the recording for a little longer and a little louder so that their tolerance to the sound builds. If they start to become scared, **stop immediately**. Reintroduce the recording the following day at a lower volume and gradually work your way up over the course of several days. You can also make sure your dog has safe place to retreat to. This may mean repositioning his bed in a cosy corner or draping his crate with a blanket to provide shelter. Soft, soothing music and lots of contact and cuddles will also help your pet to feel calm and reassured. It can also be worth trying a calming spray such as Pet Remedy or Feliway (for cats) which is available from your vets as a spray for bedding or as a plug diffuser for rooms. Finally, if all else fails and your pet's anxiety is very severe, then medication may prove extremely helpful in supporting them through the period.

Cat Friendly Clinics

During the bustle of the last few months of the year, it can be difficult to remember everything that we need to keep on top of. Luckily, routine preventative health care for your pet, need not be an issue! Members of our popular Protect My Pet Club benefit from essential treatments such as flea and worming medication and annual boosters, which are scheduled well in advance so that you need never miss an important dose. We also send handy text reminders for administering home treatments and for appointments, taking the stress away from



At the heart of veterinary excellence

trying to remember everything. However, for many cat owners, bringing your pet to the vets can still be an extremely daunting experience for both pet and owner alike. Fortunately, Blacks has a solution that greatly reduces unnecessary stress. Our accredited ISFM Cat Friendly Clinics at Lye and Sedgley are equipped to make visits to the vet an altogether more pleasant experience. Cats benefit from their own separate waiting area, away from dogs, and our vets are all trained in best practice for treating and handling cats. Our CFC branches use Feliway spray in the consulting rooms to provide a calm atmosphere and we use specially designed equipment for all feline procedures. We have dedicated cat wards for pets that are admitted and each bed is positioned not to face other cats, preventing territorial anxiety. But perhaps best of all, our CFC clinics have amazing staff who can offer pet owners a wealth of advice on everything from preparing your cat for a visit, to transporting your pet and after-care once home.

You can find more details about our Lye and Sedgley CFC Clinics by visiting www.blacksvets.co.uk and more details about the CFC scheme by visiting www.catfriendlyclinic.org.



Christmas Capers

So, hands up if your Christmas plans involve travel? Or guests coming to stay? For many of us Christmas is all about people, whether it's catching up with old friends or piling everyone into the car to stay with family. For some of us, it may even involve a trip abroad. One thing you can be sure of is that Christmas generally

brings lots of change to our usual routines. For pets, this can be a very confusing and ultimately, anxious time. Creatures of habit, most pets like predictability and familiarity; to be fed at the same time every day and walked by their usual human on their usual route. Where you can, try to stick to as many of these regular activities as possible to help your pet feel calm. If you have a full house or

are staying somewhere unfamiliar to your pet, find a quiet place that they can go to, away from noise and attention. Make sure that they have familiar smelling toys and blankets and check on them regularly. Never force your pet to be amongst visitors if they are showing signs of distress.

If a trip overseas is on the cards and you plan to take your pet with you, remember to consult your vet as early as possible to find out what certification and vaccinations may be required. Be aware that procedure for pet travel to EU countries may change after 31st October, so keep abreast of how this may affect you by visiting www.gov.uk.

However you'll be spending Christmas, the team here at Blacks Vets would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a very merry Christmas and a healthy and stress-free new year!

And remember, if you need us over the festive period, we are on call 24/7, 365 days of the year. For out-of-hours, emergency care call 01384 252509.

For further information please contact our Dudley hospital on 01384 252 509 or visit www.blacksvets.co.uk

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