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THINKING OF GIVING A PUPPY OR KITTEN
AS A CHRISTMAS GIFT?
Please Read This FIRST!!!

Everyone is familiar with the scenario... a puppy or kitten peeks out of a stocking or from the open top of a cheerfully decorated box, surrounded by wrappings, toys and other gifts under a Christmas tree. It warms our hearts and makes us want to experience those moments ourselves.

However, the holidays are NOT the time to bring a new puppy, kitten or even adult animal into the home. Puppies and kittens need time to adjust to being away from their mother and the first few weeks of their time in a new home needs to be quiet so that they can make that adjustment. Unfortunately, the holiday season is usually just the opposite -- a house full of sights, sounds and smells that can confuse and scare an animal. Adult animals also need quiet time in which to adjust to their new surroundings.

In addition, the holidays are fully of things that intrigue animals, but can be very dangerous to them -- strings of lights and extension cords to be chewed on, metallic decorations and tinsel, glass ornaments, plants and more. Because things can be so hectic, many people don't have the time to supervise their new pets properly and disaster can strike within seconds.

New puppies and kittens also need your attention in regards to training. Housebreaking and simple obedience training takes time and commitment, and in the rush of the holidays, many people don't have the time nor the commitment to train new pets properly which may lead to problems down the road. Many, many animals are turned into shelters across the country for "doing their business" in the house or chewing up the rug when in fact, they were simply never trained properly. Remember, sometimes we are asking them to do something (go outside in the case of dogs and use a litter box in the case of cats) that is not a natural behavior for them and they need time and patience in order to learn this. Unfortunately, both time and patience can be very difficult to come by during the holiday rush.

In addition to the time constraints during the holidays, many people get caught up in that "little ball of fur" effect and forget to take into consideration the fact that the animal is going to grow up into an adult -- perhaps growing into a size 4, 5 or 6 times what they see now. We hear stories every day of how a dog "is too big now" and "we don't have the room". These animals didn't do anything wrong. They simply grew up and now they're not wanted. They end up in shelters, not knowing why.

Every spring, we are overwhelmed by the amount of animals we receive at the shelter that started out as "Christmas" pets. The

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Important...

Holidays are full of things that intrigue animals, but can be very dangerous to them.

FACT...

The popular tree decorations known as "icicles" can be extremely hazardous to pets.

excuses are many -- "too busy for him", "he got SO big", "isn't housebroken".... and more. Many of these situations could have been avoided if people would just remember that an animal is not a toy -- it's a living, breathing creature that is totally dependant on you to train it correctly, spend time with it, feed it properly, exercise it, take good care of it and LOVE it. It is not a "prop" used for a photo on a Christmas card.

If you are absolutely set upon getting your family a puppy, kitten or adult animal for Christmas, consider this alternative instead: purchase a leash, a collar, a good book on raising a puppy or kitten, a gift certificate for a veterinary checkup or a spay/neuter certificate, a gift certificate for obedience classes, a book or video tape on the topic of how to select the right dog for your family, or a gift subscription to one of the dog or cat-oriented magazines.

Wrap these up and put them under the tree. As family members unwrap the various pieces of the "puzzle", their delight and anticipation will grow. They will gradually understand what this present is! Then, after the Christmas tree is taken down and the frenzy of the holiday season is behind, the family can once again enjoy together the anticipation and excitement of discussing and selecting a pet.

When that day comes, we encourage you to bring all the members of your family to the Hillside SPCA or your local animal shelter where they can meet the residents and perhaps, find the perfect pet from among the many animals who need good, loving homes.

Of Interest...

[Informative Chart of Holiday Hazards for pets](#) - includes some things you might not think about like Macadamia nuts, raisins and grapes and coffee.

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