



## Happy Christmas



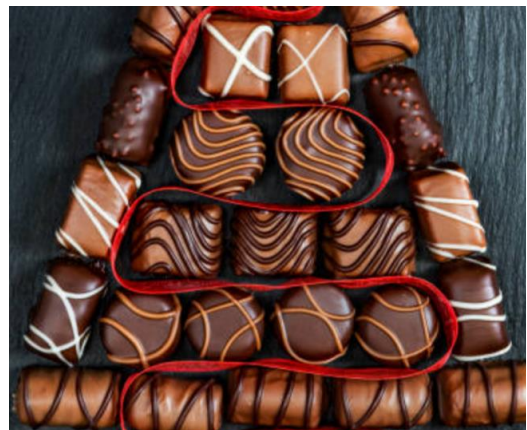
As the festive season approaches, we would like to wish all our clients and their pets a merry Christmas and a happy and healthy New Year. Please see our Christmas and New Year opening hours below. As always, there will be a vet on-call if you should need them in an emergency, just call 01566 772211.

### Christmas Opening Hours

### Christmas Treats – Naughty or Nice

We all know that the treats that make an appearance at Christmas are hard to resist, and this is no different for our furry friends. It is important to be aware of the seasonal items that can be dangerous when consumed by your pet, so please have a read of the list below so you can be prepared!

- Holly, mistletoe and poinsettia are all toxic to dogs so keep them out of reach.
- Make sure all bones and carcasses are disposed of in a dog/cat proof way as cooked bones become brittle and can shatter when ingested.
- Christmas Cake, Pudding and Mince Pies are filled with currants, raisins and sultanas which are toxic to animals, as well as large amounts of fat which can cause severe stomach troubles and alcohol which results in symptoms similar to intoxication in humans.
- Chocolate contains a stimulant, Theobromine, that is poisonous to dogs and is present in higher quantities in dark chocolate.
- Grapes and raisins are poisonous to dogs although the exact cause is unknown, so it is best to avoid them as it is difficult to predict an exact volume needed to cause symptoms.
- Christmas decorations such as tinsel can cause serious problems if ingested.



There are many precautions you can take to help avoid these situations occurring and we've included some helpful tips for you to consider:

- Don't leave pets unattended.
- Use an extension cord that shuts off automatically if damaged.
- Don't leave presents containing chocolate under your Christmas tree.
- Opt for shatter proof baubles made of animal friendly material.
- If you're using a real tree, Hoover regularly to remove pine needles or opt for an artificial tree.
- Keep rubbish/wasted food in a shed or garage to avoid bin bags being ripped open.
- Lilies are extremely toxic to cats, avoid having them in the house near your feline friends

If you know or are concerned that your pet has eaten something they should not have, please call the practice on 01566 772211.

## Castle Care Club Christmas Hampers

### Christmas Charity 2022

### New Year Fireworks

You may remember reading the article about helping your pet cope with fireworks in our October newsletter. We thought, with the new year fast approaching, that it would be useful to have this information available again

#### **1. Monitor your animal for signs of stress:**

Signs of stress in dogs include:

- |                                   |                                  |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| o Loss of appetite                | o Panting                        |
| o Increase or decrease in resting | o Salivating                     |
| o Yawning                         | o Elimination of urine or faeces |
| o Lip licking                     | o Vomiting                       |
| o Head turns                      | o Freezing                       |
| o Hiding                          | o Fidgeting                      |
| o Barking                         | o Trembling                      |
| o Seeking out people/other dogs   |                                  |

Signs of stress in cats include:

- o Excessive grooming and scratching
- o Meowing
- o Urinating outside of the litter tray
- o Hiding
- o Running away and refusing to eat
- o Darting around the house
- o Acting aggressively towards owners and other pets

## 2. Be prepared:

*Natural calming products* such as Calmex or Pet Remedy can be used. These can be very supportive. We also advise the use of *pheromones*. Adaptil and Feliway are synthetic copies of natural pheromones and have been scientifically proven to provide support in challenging and stressful situations, including during firework season.

*ThunderShirts* can also be helpful, a bit like swaddling an infant. They act by applying constant gentle pressure to the upper body which can release calming hormones.

We no longer recommend the use of older classes of sedatives as they have no beneficial effect on an animal's emotional state, and just affect their mobility. This results in a terrified animal with no ability to do anything about it! A secondary effect of sedatives is that they reduce inhibition (a bit like alcohol does in people). Reduced inhibition has caused dogs to attack (and sometimes kill) other animals in the household. We do, however, have other drugs available that provide effective short-term support. These are prescription only products so a discussion with your vet will be necessary.



## 3. On the day:

These are Castle Vets top tips for keeping your animals safe and helping them to cope

- Walk dogs before it gets dark and make sure they are on a lead with a well-fitting harness or collar.
- Make sure collar tags and microchip details are up to date.
- Ensure all windows and doors are shut and close any curtains.
- Lock or block cat flaps to stop pets escaping.
- Switch on a television or radio to drown out some of the noise.
- Don't leave your pets alone in the house if possible.
- Provide hiding places (such as a den, lined with used blankets or clothes).
- Provide activities that involve licking, chewing and sniffing (such as Licki Mat, snuffle mat, stuffed Kongs) which are all calming behaviours for dogs. Start using these before the fearful event so that your pet becomes familiar with them.
- Let your animals hide if they want to - don't try and force them to go in or come out.
- Keep in mind that cats feel more comfortable in high resting places.
- Try not to react to the fireworks or show concern.
- Stroke and talk to your pets in a calm manner (if they are looking for interaction).
- Provide extra litter trays for cats.
- Never punish or get angry with your pet.
- Never take your pet to a firework display.
- If you have rabbits or guinea pigs either bring them indoors or cover hutches with a blanket but make sure there is sufficient ventilation. A cardboard box with holes in filled with hay placed in the hutch makes a great hiding place.



## 4. Be proactive:

Animals that are scared of fireworks can also become increasingly reactive to other sounds that are similar - such as thunder, doors slamming and gun shots. Desensitisation programmes are very effective for both cats and dogs who find loud noises stressful. These programmes need to be started in a period when it is unlikely that they will be exposed to fireworks, so we recommend starting this in Feb/March time. We have a qualified behaviourist on the team that can discuss this further with you

There is increasing evidence of a link between noise phobias and other health conditions including chronic pain. An appointment with your vet is recommended initially to rule out other health conditions, especially if this is a new phobia.

For more information about any of the products mentioned or to make a vet appointment contact Castle Vets on 01566 772211.

