

MEDIA RELEASE

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Christmas goes to the dogs

Christmas is a time for gift-giving and the latest research shows that pets are now more likely to receive a Christmas gift than they were just two years ago.

Research released today by the Petcare Information and Advisory Service (PIAS) shows that gift-giving to pets at Christmas is on the rise, although a dog is more likely to receive a gift than a cat.

According to the PIAS data, in 2007 only around half of owners had ever given their dog a Christmas gift, whereas this had risen to two thirds of owners by 2009. Only 44% of owners had ever given their cat a gift for Christmas in 2007, although this had risen to 50% by 2009.

“The Christmas spirit really seems to have an impact on pet owners. Pets are much more likely to receive a present at Christmas time than on their birthday or any other occasion,” says Susie Willis from PIAS.

“Toys are far and away the most popular gift for both cats and dogs at Christmas: 66% for cats and 62% for dogs; although special food treats, including chicken wings for cats and a new bone for dogs are also popular.

“My own dog, Dixie, loves both toys and food treats so last year I bought her a squeaky rubber chicken for Christmas. She was able to join in the fun without adding to her waistline,” says Susie.

For anyone considering a gift for their four-legged friend at Christmas, PIAS encourages consideration of your pet’s needs.

“Toys are great for both dogs and cats but some pets prefer soft over squeaky or cuddly over active. Do remember that not all toys are pet friendly, sometimes even those that are sold as being suitable for pets. Always supervise your pet while it is playing with toys and avoid any toy that could be chewed into small pieces and swallowed. And don’t forget that everyday objects such as a crinkly paper bag or a ball of wool can be the perfect toy for a pet, so don’t feel you need to spend a lot of money on gifts. The important priority is to think about your pet’s personality, age and activity level and you will be sure to find the perfect present for them.

“Christmas is also a time when most of us indulge in extra food treats and it is fine to provide a treat for your dog or cat as well, but remember that much of what we eat at this time is not well suited to our pets and can sometimes even be dangerous to pets. You would be far better purchasing a toy that allows you to place your pet’s usual food inside and make your dog or cat work to get its Christmas treat,” says Susie.

PIAS also cautions that it is important to maintain the things your pet needs most from you during the busy Christmas period.

“With the wide range of toys and treats that are available for pets, it can be easy to forget that what our pets want most is to be able to spend time with us, to get plenty of mental and physical stimulation and to feel that they are a well-loved member of the family,” says Susie.

(ENDS)