



# UPPER SNAKE RIVER VALLEY DOG TRAINING CLUB

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## DECEMBER NEWSLETTER 2024

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### Christmas Party

December 14, 2024, at 6PM

There will be awards, dinner, & white elephant

\$25 per person

**Please RSVP and pay online**

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If you can and would like to donate a bag of dog or cat food, please bring it to the Christmas party. Lois will take all donated bags to the shelter decided by the board.

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Member Dues are due.  
Please pay online on our website.

## MEMBER ACCOMPLISHMENTS

12 year old Shetland sheepdog London finished 3 titles in October. FDN, RC and T2B



# Holidays With Dogs: Christmas



It's that time of year again! The time when the Christmas tree gets decorated, the hot cocoa gets brewed, the home is decorated for the season, and our dogs get dressed up in silly reindeer antlers. Spending this [holiday](#) with our buddy can be one of the most joyous experiences, whether we put them in silly antlers or not. We love seeing how excited they get when they receive a new Christmas gift or how much fun they have when our family visits. However, as merry as these festivities can be, we must also watch out for some of their mischievous ways that could harm them, such as sneaking off with [holiday goodies which are toxic](#) to them or collapsing the Christmas tree when we aren't looking. That is why it's so important to ensure we are taking the best safety precautions for our loved ones to keep the Christmas spirit going throughout the whole season.

## Are Real Christmas Trees Safe for Dogs?

Unfortunately, no. Dogs cannot eat any part of the Christmas tree, including the pine needles on many fir trees. This includes the Christmas tree water. Other [holiday plants](#) are also toxic to dogs and should be kept out of reach of pets. These items can cause [vomiting](#), [diarrhea](#), excessive drooling, and more. In addition, if the sharp pine needles get ingested, there is a risk that it can cause internal damage, such as puncturing the lining or bunching together and causing an intestinal obstruction. Thankfully, it is rare for a dog to eat enough of the tree to cause anything outside of some [GI issues](#) to occur. If your pup is eating needles, consider putting up a Christmas tree barrier so your dog cannot access the tree.

On top of the tree, the items on and around it can become a potential hazard. This includes the following:

- **Tinsel, garlands, and angel hair**, which can get ingested and cause intestinal blockages and GI issues.
- **Low hanging glass ornaments** that can get knocked off and shattered causing danger for humans and pets.
- **Cords** from Christmas tree lights that a dog might mistake as a new chew toy, potentially resulting in an electrical shock.
- **Candy** tree decorations, which contain [xylitol](#), a sugar substitute that is very toxic to dogs and can even be fatal.

- **Presents** under the tree that your dog might be tempted to eat and tear apart, leading to various health concerns depending on what they ingested.
- **Other tree decorations** that a dog might think are new chew toys, resulting in GI and other concerns.

Dog-proofing your Christmas tree becomes an important and necessary step during the holidays to ensure that none of the above comes to fruition.

### **How to Dog Proof Your Christmas Tree and Presents**

You might be wondering, *How do I keep my dog away from the Christmas tree?* The last thing we want is for our beloved pup to knock the tree over or consume something on the tree which can make them ill. Luckily, there are plenty of great ways to dog proof your Christmas tree, allowing everyone to enjoy the holidays with a peace of mind.

Here are some examples on how you can keep your dog and tree safe during the holidays:

- Set up a pet gate around your Christmas tree or place it in a room behind a closed door where your pup cannot access it unsupervised.
- Try opting for a faux fir tree, which is a safer Christmas tree option. You won't have to worry as much about those pesky pine needles being eaten, ingested, or getting between your buddy's paws.
- If you use a real tree that needs watering, then make sure to cover the tree stand so that your dog won't drink the water. Not only can the water be toxic to dogs, it can also contain harmful bacteria and other pathogens that are not safe to ingest.
- Install pet-safe cord protectors around any electrical items, like Christmas lights, and place these items out of reach of your dog if possible.
- Place fragile ornaments and Christmas tree décor towards the top of your tree and away from your dog.
- Use plastic or plush ornaments that are shatterproof and cannot hurt your pet.
- Use zip ties, floral wire, or plastic hooks to affix any ornaments, electrical cords, and/or other holiday décor.
- Decorate your tree with as many dog-safe alternatives as possible, such as nonbreakable ornaments.
- Keep anything edible and potentially toxic away from your buddy. Try keeping these items inside high-up and out-of-reach holiday stockings instead.
- Don't place any presents under the tree until you are ready to open them, in case your dog decides to help themselves to a present or two.
- Avoid tinsel, garland, and angel hair on a Christmas tree. Perhaps decorate with Christmas cards or paper garland instead.
- Use a weighted base or attach weights to a tree base to hold your Christmas tree in place, so it cannot get tipped over easily.
- Teach your dog [safety cues](#), such as "[down](#)", "[sit](#)", "[stay](#)", "[leave it](#)", and "go to your place".

The more precautions you take, the better the Christmas experience will be for everyone and the less you will have to worry about.

## Other Dog Christmas Hazards

If Christmas trees weren't enough to worry about, there are other holiday hazards that must be watched out for around your pets:

- **Candles.** Unattended candles could accidentally get knocked over by your loved one, creating a serious fire hazard and potentially burning your dog as well. If you choose to do candles for the holidays, either ensure that they are out of reach from your buddy or try using LED candles instead. There are even pet-safe candles that use healthier materials if you prefer real candles to fake ones. These candles will still need to be monitored and placed out of reach as well, so no accidents occur.
- **Snow globes.** As beautiful as these decorations are, snow globes contain ethylene glycol (antifreeze) inside. If your dog knocks these off and they get broken, the glass can hurt your buddy and the liquid is highly toxic, so always keep snow globes well out of reach.
- **Firestarter logs.** Dogs might think these are chew toys; however, Firestarter logs contain sawdust and paraffin which aren't healthy for our pets. If these get ingested, they could cause GI issues or intestinal blockages. It's best to keep these in a safe location that your dog can't access.
- **Other holiday plants and festive flowers.** There are several seasonal plants that are poisonous to your pup, including [lilies](#), mistletoe, holly, ivy, [poinsettias](#), and more. These plants can cause vomiting, diarrhea, excessive drooling, lack of coordination, and more. If you suspect your dog has eaten any of these, call your vet right away. You might even want to consider changing out the real plants for fake ones instead.
- **Christmas foods and holiday drinks.** There are many different foods and drinks that are poisonous to dogs, such as [chocolates](#), [grapes](#), onions, garlic, raisins, hot cocoa, alcohol, and more. Even the oils, butter, added ingredients, and seasonings on certain foods, such as a Christmas turkey, could make your buddy sick or worse. If you want to give your pup a holiday treat, it's best to just stick with [dog treats](#) that are formulated specifically for dogs and only given in moderation. Treats should not exceed more than 10% of your pet's total daily calorie intake.
- **Choking hazards.** Between all the Christmas decorations and holiday snacks, such as [nuts](#), there seems to be a risk of multiple choking hazards all around. Make sure that you are keeping any potential choking hazards out of reach from your pet and keeping an eye out for anything that might cause harm to your loved one.
- **Your dog's temperature.** With the temperatures getting colder during this time of year, it's important to [keep your dog warm](#) throughout the holidays. Make

sure they always have a warm and safe place to retreat to. It's also important to make sure they aren't getting too hot from the heat being turned on. If you see your dog panting or pacing more than usual, it's best to move them to a cooler area and make sure they have plenty of fresh, cold water to drink. Monitoring your dog's temperature is key, especially if they are already unsettled by lots of guests or unusual activity during the Christmas excitement.

- **Visiting guests.** We love seeing our family and friends over the holidays, but our dog might become [overwhelmed](#) by all the people – especially if they are not used to it. Ensuring that they have a quiet space to go to that is just for them, fixed with blankets, food, water, their favorite items, toys and [treats](#) to chew on, and other comfort items, will make them feel more relaxed and will help your dog to leave guests alone while all the merriment is going on.
- **Purses and coats.** As hilarious as it is to watch our pet's head get stuck in someone's purse or steal something out of someone's coat pocket, it's also important to make sure they aren't eating anything which could harm them. A lot of people carry medications, candy, chewing gum, and other items which could cause a Christmas emergency depending on what your dog ingests.
- **Gifting a [new puppy](#).** It is not recommended to surprise anyone with the gift of a new puppy. Although, a puppy is one of the most exciting gifts to give, there is a ton of preparation and a lot of factors which must be taken into consideration ahead of time to ensure a smooth transition, such as:
  - Is my family ready for the commitment of [raising a puppy](#)?
  - Can we afford all the expenses of owning a puppy, such as vet expenses, [food](#), toys, collars and tags, [dog grooming](#), [puppy training](#) classes, and more?
  - Does my family even want a puppy?
  - What kind of type, size and [breed](#) does our family want?
  - Have we [puppy proofed our home](#) properly?

While there is much to think about during Christmas, these [holiday safety tips](#) will help to keep things running smoothly and safely as the Christmas joy continues throughout the season.

If you suspect your dog has ingested anything toxic, call your veterinarian or nearby animal hospital immediately. You can also contact the [Animal Poison Control Center](#) (APCC) at (888) 426-4435.

### **Does Your Dog Get Overly Excited When Guests Come Over? How to Keep Your Dog Calm at Christmas**

It is likely that the whole family and everyone's friends have come over for the holidays to celebrate this special time of year together. There is probably plenty of excitement in the air, food and drinks being shared, adults engaged in exciting conversations, kids

running around hyper, and your dog who is caught in the middle of all the fun. Your buddy might be feeling a bit overwhelmed and overexcited at this point due to their normal routine being changed thanks to all the holiday amusements and multitude of people. They might even be exhibiting signs of distress, including tension, licking their lips or yawning, looking worried, lowering their [body language](#), attempting to hide, growling, removing themselves from the chaos, and more. If you see any signs of distress in your dog, then this is when you need to step in and help them to feel relaxed once again.

Thankfully, there are plenty of ways to help keep your dog calm during this time of year:

- **Try your best to maintain as much of their regular routine as possible for bathroom breaks, exercise, and more.** This will help to keep some things normalized in your buddy's world while making them feel remembered and loved.
- **Make time for your dog every day.** The time you spend with your pup is one of the best Christmas gifts you can give them. This will ensure their emotional and physical needs are being met throughout the holiday season. It will also strengthen your bond and bring the two of you closer together, which will provide them with a stronger sense of security when things do start to get chaotic from all the holiday excitement.
- **Supervise all interactions between children and dogs.** Christmas time is one of the times of year where dogs can become so overwhelmed that they start biting people, and most of those victims tend to be children. By keeping your dog close to you and within your supervision, this will help you gauge whether their interaction with others is causing them stress, [aggression](#), or if they are relaxed. If they do show signs of distress or aggression, you will be able to step in and help them regain a calm disposition again. This will keep everyone safe during the holidays.
- **Don't let anyone – child or adult – handle your dog roughly or inappropriately.** That means no grabbing, hugging, or rough play unless you know that your pup is ok with these forms of interactions and is having fun. This is especially true of someone who might have had too much to drink, because from the dog's perspective, a drunk person can behave unpredictably. Furthermore, that person might not be able to read a dog's body language very well in such a state and can accidentally hurt your best friend. Therefore, it's best to encourage calm and simple interactions between others and your dog. It is also a good idea to teach your dog to greet guests politely by training them to sit and stay.
- **Keep the dog out of the kitchen.** There's a lot of cooking that is going on in the kitchen during this festive period which poses new threats to your pet. The kitchen is filled with hot stoves, burners, and oil; unsafe and [toxic foods for dogs](#); lots of dangerous utensils, such as knives; and more. It's better to keep

your buddy out of the kitchen, especially if you know they are the type of dog who might steal some food when you aren't looking.

- **Have a 'safe space' for your dog where they can go and be undisturbed.** Set this space up in a way that provides your buddy with enough food, water, toys, treats, and comfort that you can possibly give them. Whether this is a quiet room or you have [crate trained](#) them, ensure that this is a space they feel safe in and can get away from all the noise and excitement that the holidays have to offer. Allow this to be a place where they can relax and breathe a little easier in, so that they can get back to being your calm and loveable pup that you adore.
- **Give your dog a chew toy and/or some calming supplements.** There are many [calming supplements](#) out there that can help your dog relax more. Furthermore, if they have a favorite chew toy or [treat](#), this could help them relax as well. Even a toy that they just love to snuggle up to can be a massive stress relief for your dog.

Staying on top of your dog's emotional well-being should be top priority when it comes to ensuring that no major incidents occur between others and your pet.

## Dog Christmas Safety Tips

To recap everything that we discussed above, here are some outlines below:

### Decorations and Holiday Items That Are Best to Avoid

- Anything edible, especially chocolate or candy (like candy canes) that might contain the sugar substitute xylitol – both of which are [toxic to dogs](#). This includes drinks, such as hot cocoa and alcohol.
- Real Christmas trees, especially the pine tree variety
- Glass
- Bells
- Metal hooks
- Strings of popcorn (the string, if swallowed, can cause severe intestinal issues)
- Salt dough ornaments (which can cause salt poisoning in dogs)
- Tinsel
- Angel hair
- Garlands
- Snow globes
- Christmas decorations that can act as choking hazards
- Toxic holiday plants
- Candles
- Firestarter logs
- Low electrical cords
- Presents under the tree



## **Safer Options**

- Artificial Christmas trees that are weighed down securely
- Plush ornaments
- Plastic ornaments
- Plastic hooks
- Twist ties or floral wire (for hanging ornaments)
- Christmas cards
- Simple paper ornaments and paper garland
- Dog-safe plants
- Dog-safe food and treats
- LED candles
- Use pet-safe cord protectors
- Place anything dangerous (glass, candles, etc.) up high and out of your dog's reach
- Keep presents stored away until it's time to open them
- Keep edible foods stored away in a safe spot until it's time to bring these items out

## **Be Mindful Of**

- Signs that your dog is feeling distressed.
- Your dog's temperature and physical well-being.
- Maintaining a regular routine with your pet and spending quality time with them.
- Establishing a safe place in the home for your pup.
- Visiting guests and their interactions with your buddy.
- Where purses, coats, presents, food, drinks, and other items are being stored and whether they are in your dog's reach.
- Keeping your Christmas tree weighed down in a space that is either protected with a pet gate or closed off to any unsupervised pets.
- Any choking hazards that could harm your dog.
- Anything that can be knocked off and broken.
- Signs that your dog might have ingested something toxic, such as vomiting, diarrhea, loss of coordination, etc. Call your local vet, nearby animal hospital, or the APCC at (888) 426-4435 if they start to exhibit any concerning symptoms.

Christmas is meant to be a magical time of the year, so by keeping your loved one calm, happy, and safe you will only add to the enchantment of this festive season.

## **USRVDTC Board Meeting**

Meeting Date November 21, 2024

The regular monthly board meeting of the Upper Snake River Valley Dog Training Club was called to order by President, Nicki Bowden at 7:00pm, on Thursday, November 21, 2024 at Smitty's in Idaho Falls, ID.

### **Board Members Present:**

Richard Brizzee Nicki Bowden Suzanne Belger Mira Johnson Lacey Moon John Baughman

**Minutes of Previous Regular Meeting Read/Dispensed:** Printed in October newsletter.

Motion by Richard Brizzee to accept minutes as printed in October newsletter.

### **Reports:**

**President:** Held for regular club meeting

**Vice President:** Held for regular club meeting

**Treasurer:** Held for regular club meeting

**Secretary:** none

**Unfinished Business:** No unfinished business

**New Business:** No new business

**Motion to Adjourn** by Suzanne at 7:01

## **USRVDTC REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

Meeting Date November 21, 2024

The regular monthly club meeting of the Upper Snake River Valley Dog Training Club was called to order by President, Nicki Bowden, at 7:02 p.m., on Thursday, November 21, 2024 at Smitty's in Idaho Falls, ID.

### **Board Members Present:**

Richard Brizzee Nicki Bowden Suzanne Belger Mira Johnson Lacey Moon John Baughman

### **Members Present:**

Cheryl Loomis Duane Loomis Alicia Thompson Steven Olson Lois Olson Amy Hall  
Nichole Nead-Crossley Heike Vitacolonna Lori Keele Kelly Keele Lindy Thompson Phil Moon  
Shelly Bradford Bryce Hammond Tiffany Stolworthy Christina Krieger Holly Jossi Emily  
Jossi

### **Guests**

Sarah Kain Paula Kain

### **Introductions of guests**

**Minutes of Previous Regular Meeting Read/Dispensed:** Printed in November newsletter.

Motion by Lois Olson to accept minutes as printed in November newsletter.

Seconded by: Richard Brizzee

### **Report of the President:**

Member dues are due. Pay online on our website.

### **Report of the Vice President:**

Christmas Party at Valerie Hall Saturday, December 14<sup>th</sup> . You can buy your dinner tickets on our website. We'll have a gift exchange (white elephant about \$20) and fun new games.

Richard was given information from a massage therapist for dogs. It was decided to have her come to our next club meeting in February to do a presentation.

**Report of the Secretary:**

AKC Dues due. Suzanne said she paid them.

**Report of the Treasurer:**

YTD balance of \$108523.77 and YTD net profit of \$3961.45. Insurance still due

Reports filed with minutes and available via email if interested in viewing.

**Report of Committees:**

**Scent Work Trial:** (Nicki Reported) Trial is 3/1-3/2/2025. Judge hired, location still up in the air.

**Agility:** (Nicki) LaDawn is stepping down as agility trial chair. We need to get it filled pretty quickly in order to get the paperwork filed in time. Judges have been hired already. LaDawn will help set up the new chair. Email Nicki if you're interested.

**Winter classes:** Classes begin 1/8/25 for winter classes and will be running 8 weeks. Cheryl, Tiffany, and Kristina are teaching. Classes are posted online. At 5:45 there will be 1 basic obedience and 1 basic rally. At 6:45, there will be 1 basic obedience and 1 intermediate rally. We've paid for the 4H building.

**CGC:** Wednesday, March 5, 2025

**Unfinished Business:**

**Winter Agility Practices** - Amy Hall and Richard Brizzee did some research - AnnaLee (used to own Wind River Arena) won't have her arena ready until late winter at \$65 per hour. Amy will be keeping in touch with her to check progress. Cowboy Warrior Arena \$75/hour Saturday mornings. They'll groom the arena. **If you're interested in participating in winter agility, email Richard.** If there is enough interest, we will get more serious about commitment.

**Winter Club Practices** - **If you're interested email Richard and let him know what night** (Monday, Tuesday, Thursday) would be best. It may be possible to use the Rigby 4H building. If Rigby building isn't available, we'll look into something else (if there's enough interest).

**Election of 2025 Board**

Christina Krieger - 3-year board member

Nicki Bowden - President

Richard Brizzee - Vice President

Lacey Moon - Secretary

Suzanne Belger - Treasurer

**New Business:**

Lois Olson- Do we want to bring some dog/cat food and donate it to a local shelter? She wants to have people bring unopened bags to the Christmas party and she will take them to a shelter. Richard will include this in the email he sends out to remind people of the party.

Lois Olson is wanting to teach a tracking class in the spring so if you're interested, keep tuned in for more information.

Richard Brizzee- Should we purchase some of the new rally regulation books for the club? Nicki asked Lacey to order the 5 free books for the club.

Suzanne needs an audit committee for the books before year-end -Kristina Krieger, Kelly Keel and Lois Olson volunteered.

**Membership Applications Read/Approved:**

Nicki was given an application that she cannot read because: 1-the applicant hasn't taken a class from our club or titled a dog 2-the applicant and/or sponsor did not attend the meeting. She will be giving the application back to the sponsor to let them know these 2 criteria need to be met before the reading of the application.

Paula/Sara Kain application read. Will be voted on at next meeting (February).

**Motion for Adjournment:** Steven Olson

**Seconded by:** Lois Olson

Closed at 7:43pm