

Pure Dog Talk 346 – Safely Incorporating our Dogs in Holiday Festivities

Pure Dog Talk is the voice of purebred dogs. We talk to the legends of the sport and give you the tips and tools to create an awesome life with your purebred dog. From showing to preservation breeding, from competitive obedience to field work, from agility to therapy dogs, and all the fun in between, your passion is our purpose.

Pure Dog Talk is proudly sponsored by Trupanion, medical insurance for your pets. During the holidays, mischievous puppies faced countless temptations from wrapping paper to decorations to tasty treats. Take a listen to our conversation with Dr. Marty Greer today to learn a little bit more about that. Meanwhile, if your pet gets into trouble, Trupanion is here to help. Last year, the Trupanion policy paid almost half a million dollars in foreign body and toxicity claims during the holiday season alone. A Trupanion policy helps remove the financial stress after a pet's unexpected illness and injury, allowing you to focus on what really matters: the health of your pet.

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Laura Reeves:

Welcome to Pure Dog Talk. I'm your host, Laura Reeves. And I have our very favorite veterinary guest, Dr. Marty Greer. And Marty and I are going to have a pretty cool conversation. It is the season of holiday festivities, and Marty and I want to talk about how you can safely incorporate your pet into your holiday festivities. And there's all kinds of things that can go wrong, but let's talk about how to do it and have it be fun. Does that sound good?

Dr. Marty Greer:

Oh, yeah.

Laura Reeves:

I love it.

Dr. Marty Greer:

That's perfect. Because I want it to go right. And I don't want it to be all scary and it's not going to work out, but there are definitely some safety things that we can do to make it a much better experience for us and our pets.

Laura Reeves:

Absolutely. But I think the fact that the dogs should get to participate. They're part of the family.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Oh, yeah.

Laura Reeves:

Let's see how that happens and does it well. So give me a for instance.

Dr. Marty Greer:

For instance, you have a new puppy or a new kitten and a string of lights that runs with the cord across the floor and up your tree. So how do we keep them safe from the cord? And how do we keep them safe from tipping the tree over?

Laura Reeves:

Yes. Tell us how we do that, Marty.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Oh, yeah. I'm glad you asked. Actually, this happened to a client last year, not at Christmas, but in another setting that her puppy did chew through an electric cord and unfortunately succumbed to that. So this is a real thing. This isn't just something that we kind of pretend might happen. She was, of course, very distraught, and it was a terrible, terrible experience.

So the first thing that you need to do when you have those really thin cords that the electric lights are on, those little tiny lights, those chords are thin and they're thin enough that a small puppy or a small kitten can chew through those pretty easily. So you can go to the store or go to one of the online places and purchase the corrugated tubing that goes around the cord. So it goes all the way from the plug where the cord goes into the lighting part. And of course that should be high enough up into the tree that the puppy won't get to it. Kittens are a little trickier. You have to kind of bury it in the branches of a tree because kittens will climb trees. Puppies will approach climbing them, but never really be successful. But kittens will go right up the trunk, which can be just a little bit exciting to watch your tree swing.

So the first thing to do is cover those cords. The heavy, thick outdoor cords tend not to be much of a problem. And a lot of the chords that are running to the electric devices that keep water bowls thawed in the winter time and keep the pet warm outside, like little cat houses and the little dog beds and those things, those already have a metal type of coil around them. So those are pretty safe, but the little teeny cords in our house are really, it just takes one little bite, and literally the pet is electrocuted.

And one of my employees, my current employees, her dad actually reached under the bed when one of their cats chewed into a cord to pull it off the electric cord because he heard it happening, and he got electrocuted as well. Of course, he survived, but you want to be really careful with the fact that not only can you have a primary electrocution, but it can travel through the pet's body and to you. So you want to flip a switch or pull the cord out of the wall or something before you try to retrieve the pet for your own safety.

Laura Reeves:

Oh, my goodness. Okay. So on a happy note, we can prevent all these things.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Yes. Yes, we can. So all we need to do is to wrap those cords in coils, those plastic corrugated. They're black. So they're not a very pretty color, but they're easy to find. The hardware stores are going to carry them and the big stores like Home Depot and Lowe's and Menards and all those. Then of course, on the online stores, you can also find them too. So they're just a corrugated cord cover for safety.

Laura Reeves:

Like it.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Unfortunately they're not pretty, but they're very functional,

Laura Reeves:

Yeah, but you can cover it up with a pretty rug. It'll be okay.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Oh yeah, you could improve on it.

Laura Reeves:

You can decorate it. You can cover it in tinsel.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Exactly. Just be kind of creative about it. And the other thing is, like I said, the tree tipping over, and actually I've had my own personal Christmas tree fall over twice. Once the dog's big Labrador tail hit it and knocked it over. And the other time my husband shut the front door so hard that the three sitting in the living room toppled over. So there's a couple tips. The first is teach your husband not to slam the front door. But if you're good at that, then you're a better husband trainer than I am. What you can do is take a plant hook that you've got secured into the ceiling and you can run a small wire from the plant hook to the top branch of the tree and secure that. And then you can still put your tree top around. You can still get your little angel or your little star, whatever it is that you put on the top of your tree, it'll still go on top of the tree and be very festive looking, but it's a much safer way to approach it.

Of course, then you also have to worry about all the breakable ornaments and the ornaments that dogs and cats will chew up that might be on your tree. So what I do in my house, because I have a lot of dogs and a lot of cats as a lot of your people out there listening to us will have as well, is I put bells on the bottom of the tree so that if the dog is over there messing around on the tree, it's a dead giveaway. I can hear it from across the house and come peeling in and make sure that she's not doing anything she shouldn't. Or hang candy canes from the lower branches with the cellophane off because cellophane can be ingested and cause an obstruction. But if you hang candy canes on the bottom and they eat a candy cane, it won't hurt them. If you hang bells on the bottom, you can hear them and you can intervene and then put your other ornaments that are a little bit more vulnerable to being chewed up and causing possible obstructions, put those higher on the tree. Or if they're glass ornaments, you may not even put them out the year you have a puppy or kitten.

Laura Reeves:

Yes, I love the bells. The bells is actually very clever. I have always, of course, when in a pinch used an exercise pen or baby gates or what have you if you need to block somebody. But I mean, I can go back to my childhood when we had six random, God only knows what dogs running around the house. And the one that had just been adopted from the animal shelter pooped on the presents. Fluffy. His name was literally Fluffy, and Fluffy pooped on the presents.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Oh, that's unfortunate.

Laura Reeves:

Yeah. Yep.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Oh, my goodness.

Laura Reeves:

Control. Control your environment, right? I mean, I think that's always a thing that we talk about with dogs. Decorations and then poisonous plants.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Oh, yeah.

Laura Reeves:

And everybody does the mistletoe's bad and the red ones, what do we call them, are bad.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Poinsettias.

Laura Reeves:

Yes, poinsettias are bad.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Yeah. And actually that's really interesting because the mistletoe is bad. It has berries, and that is bad. So if you're going to hang mistletoe, make sure it's fake mistletoe. But the poinsettias are actually not toxic in spite of the fact that for years we've been told that, they are not. Easter Lilies are toxic. Mistletoe is toxic, but poinsettias are not now. I don't encourage pets to go over and munching on the leaves. But even the red part, the leaves, the stems, the little yellow berries in the middle, none of those are toxic to dogs or cats. So that's the really good news is, you can safely put out a poinsettia regardless of the color. And here in Wisconsin, sometimes they come in different colors. They come in green and gold because that's the Packer color, but you'll certainly see other colors of poinsettias. None of them are toxic.

Laura Reeves:

That is so good to know. And what else do we see this time of year that's legitimately toxic, not just going to make the dog not feel good?

Dr. Marty Greer:

Greens that are made from yew leaves. The yew Y-E-W not Y-O-U. So yew plants are actually very, very toxic. We used to laugh because we were taught in veterinary school that it is so toxic that a dog, cat, cow, horse, whatever happens to get into it and eat it, will die with a piece of yew in their mouth. And it would be the Y-E-W not the Y-O-U kind of you. So they are very, very toxic, very rapidly fatal. So you want to definitely avoid any of those types of greens. So if you're getting greens, don't go up to your front of your house somewhere you've got those beautiful yew bushes, think that you can clip a few of those off and bring them into the home safely because you really can't. It's really a very bad idea to do that. So be extremely careful what you're bringing in.

Laura Reeves:

That's new one. I like it. I had not heard that one. Wow. Okay.

Dr. Marty Greer:

It's bad. I mean, it's bad. You want to be extremely careful with that one.

Laura Reeves:

And so what do we see if we've hit toxicity with a yew or with a mistletoe or we're visiting and we brought the dog to the neighbor's gift exchange and there's a yew thing and the dog? What do we do in that sort of situation? Or what do we look for, all of that?

Dr. Marty Greer:

Well, you maybe not bring the pet in, or just make sure that you keep them really closely tethered to you so that there's nothing dangerous that could go on. Because you want to be really careful. The other things that can be toxic this time of year are going to be macadamia nuts. Those are toxic to dogs. Any of the sugarless candies sweetened with Xylitol. We've talked about this in the past, but any Xylitol sweets.

Laura Reeves:

Yeah, xylitol. I just saw another dog that died from breaking into a thing of gum, sugar free gum. It's just so scary.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Yeah. We actually just had a client that, that happened to their dog and they ended up going to the referral center because it did not happen during the hours that we were open. We're open 80 hours a week. And of course he managed to do it during an off hour. But ate a hundred pieces of gum and that's way plenty to cause a toxicity. So macadamia

nuts, sugarless gum and candy are pretty dangerous. And then raisins. And actually a couple of Christmases ago, we had a client who had, her father loves chocolate covered raisins. So she purchased a bag and wrapped them and put them under the Christmas tree. And because she spent three minutes wrapping them and putting them into the tree and the dog spent the next 23 hours and 57 minutes discovering that they were there, ended up eating those. So not only had a toxicity potential from that chocolate, but also from the raisins. So it was a pretty expensive Christmas. It required vomiting. It required charcoal. And it required several days in the hospital on IV fluids.

Dr. Marty Greer:

The good news is the dog was black to begin with. So the charcoal wasn't quite so messy as it is on those cute little light-colored dogs.

Laura Reeves:

Oh, my goodness.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Yeah. There's nothing good about any of that stuff. So be careful with those. And I actually was talking about macadamia nuts with someone else the other day, and they said, "Well, I don't have to worry about those because they're so expensive. I don't even think about buying them and putting them on my wishlist. Which is a legitimate thing. But you still want to be aware that you may have friends that are generous and they want to give you something really fabulous.

Laura Reeves:

White chocolate macadamia nut cookies. I mean, my favorite thing in the world, right?

Dr. Marty Greer:

Yeah. But macadamia nuts are bad.

Laura Reeves:

Okay.

Dr. Marty Greer:

So those are the things that you have to start thinking about at Christmas time is all those things. And like I said, you put them under the tree, the dog is curious, they've got all day to rattle around the house if you're not crating them while you take a shower, while you sleep, while you run to the store, any of those things the dog is like, "Oh, this is cool. I wonder when they put this in." And so they go over and check out the tree, the lights, the presents.

Laura Reeves:

Right. So extra crating time maybe not a bad thing. Baby gates and or X-pens, not a bad thing at all.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Right. Absolutely. They're great.

Laura Reeves:

Yeah. Decorate your X-pen.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Yeah. They're a great tool. So room dividers, I mean, there's a lot of different devices that you can use to keep the pet safe, whether it's an X-pen or a room divider or whatever it happens to be. Sometimes closing the door, just being really careful that there's not any exposure.

And then my other favorite story isn't that the dog ended up with the toxicity, but the dog cookies that were given to people as a gift get wrapped and put under the tree. And I've had multiple husbands tell me that they've tried the dog cookie not recognizing that it's actually a dog cookie, and it's not toxic to the human, but it's not tasty. They've recognized pretty quickly that it's the worst tasting cookie they've ever had in their life.

Laura Reeves:

Liver brownies are probably.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Yeah. Husbands aren't very smart sometimes. So you have to be protective of them.

Laura Reeves:

Oh my gosh, liver brownies. No, don't get into those brownies. Really.

Dr. Marty Greer:

You got it. Because they're tempted. They look convincingly good.

Laura Reeves:

And speaking of food, again, we all know no poultry bones, right? We all know don't feed a ton of table scraps, but this is the time of year where the three second rule, and it doesn't matter if you have a five second rule if you have a three second dog, some of those things.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Exactly.

Laura Reeves:

Let's talk about overeating and over fattening and pancreatitis and some of these things.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Right. And those are all really very significant concerns. It's easy to throw bones into the trash and not realize that the dog is going to get into them. So you want to be very protective of that. Take the garbage out right away. Just because you think the dog can't get into something that you've put into the trash doesn't mean they can't. They can get under the countertops. They can do all kinds of really naughty things.

One of my dogs, my own personal dogs, ate an entire carrot cake, homemade carrot cake, it must have weighed eight pounds, during the night. And I got up the next morning and here's the plate very neatly still on the countertop and the cake is completely missing. And so I asked my husband, "So, did you eat the whole carrot cake overnight?" And he's like, "I have no idea what you're talking about." So it was pretty clear at that point the dog had had a really lovely time. And fortunately, she's a Labrador. She didn't get sick from it. But too much fat, as in cream cheese frosting, too much fat, as in getting into the trash where the leftover bones or skin from the turkey or the ham is.

Those wrappers that come with, those mesh wrappers that come around the turkey, they taste like chicken. So a dog is more than happy to eat those. Even those little plastic holders that hold the legs together at the front of the chicken or the turkey to keep them tightly together when you're going to put them in the oven, I've had a dog eat one of those entire thing and end up with an obstruction and surgery from that. So if it tastes like chicken, if you think that it can go down your dog, if you even think it can't go down your dog, it can. So you just want to be extremely careful because they'll eat anything smaller than their head. And sometimes even that doesn't count. They'll eat something bigger than their heads. They'll just tear it up first.

Laura Reeves:

Please, if you have any question, reference back to our last podcast topic on blockages. Yes.

Dr. Marty Greer:

And remember, canned spinach does a great job if it's small and will pass.

Laura Reeves:

I have to tell you. One of my listeners told me they were going to go try canned spinach on something. I can't remember what the dog ate, but they were going to go try the canned spinach trick. I'm like, yes. I think it's perfect. Everybody stock up on canned spinach for that broken glass ornament. Oh, my God.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Yeah. So forget the pumpkin. Get the spinach. You'll be fine.

Laura Reeves:

And I think too, holidays, we all think our dogs are good. They would never do anything. But think about it. You have lots of extra people. You're distracted. The dog's left a little bit more to fend for itself. So things happen during the holidays, even if it's not a brand new baby.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Exactly. And children never fall in the swimming pool when there's one person watching them. They only fall in the pool when there's 10 people, and the other 10 people all think someone else is watching them. So that's when it really gets dangerous. Many years ago, my first year out of school, we had a dog that came to the practice on New Year's Eve, and the people that had a party at their home and the dog was acutely acting atactic and stumbling around and acting really strangely. And we questioned them multiple times about whether the dog could have gotten into anything that it shouldn't have, including an alcoholic beverage. And they said, "Oh, absolutely not. We asked everyone at the party and everyone declined that that had happened." And by the time they left, the dog vomited, and my technician said, "White wine. There's white wine in this vomit."

So we ran a blood alcohol level on the dog. Indeed, that's what it was. And when they got back to the party at their home, someone finally admitted to them they'd set their glass of white wine on the floor and did not mean for the dog to ingest it, but a little tiny dog that hasn't ever had any exposure to alcohol is going to become inebriated on a very small amount. So be really careful that people in your home realize that there's a dog there, and maybe it's best not to even invite the dog to the party. Maybe it's best to let them sleep in a quiet bedroom where there's no one else in there hanging around and bugging them. It might just be the safest thing for you to do, is to either board the dog, send them to a friend's home, or pack them up and put them into a bedroom where they're safe and it's a much safer environment than having them out where there's exposures to all these well-meaning people. No one means to make the dog sick.

Laura Reeves:

Right. And I think, going back to our original concept, how do we incorporate the dog into the festivities? I think we think about that judiciously, right? Maybe not during the meal. Maybe during the meal, the dog can go to its crate and have a nice, safe chew toy and have a nap. Or it can have some pumpkin from the pumpkin pie stuffed in a Kong toy. And so then it gets to feel like it's part of the festivity. And if we're going to share some of the leftovers, use the meat rather than all the fat. And avoid all the potatoes and all the gravy and those sorts of things. So the dog feels like it's participating, it gets a raw carrot. Everybody else is having candied carrots. So the ways that we incorporate them are possible.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Exactly. I make chicken stock and turkey stock. Anytime that I have bones, I cook those down. You can do it on the stove top or you can do it in your slow cooker or your pressure cooker, and cook the carrots and the celery with it. And then my dogs get that cooked celery and cooked carrots, not any of the onions of course, and little snippets of the meat, but none of the fat, none of the bone, none of the onions. Oh, my goodness. They know when I am making stock. They get very excited because they know something yummy is coming.

Laura Reeves:

Well, and my mother used to, back in the day, I don't know if you've ever tried this. This was the most amazing thing. We had a dog. It was a Clumber dog that just wouldn't eat. It was terrible. Couldn't get any weight on it, what have you. And she would take her pressure cooker, which I know there's insta-pots and things like that, that I don't know very much about, but she would take a real live actual pressure cooker, click the handle together pressure cooker with a rattling top, and she would pressure cook the bones until they were mush and she would mush them and the calories and that added to this dog that didn't have weight. So it's possible to incorporate that into a feeding regimen, if you're smart about how you do it.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Right. And what you don't want to do is exceed 10% of their diet being other things besides commercially manufactured dog food, because the manufacturer spent millions of dollars creating a well balanced diet. So if we come along and then poof, make it 20% or 50% of their diet that's something other than what was designed for them to eat, then of course we mess up their nutritional balance. So you want to be careful with the amount that you do. But those little tiny bits of things top dressed onto the foods can make a huge difference in the dog's interest in the food and the palatability to those dogs that are particular eaters.

Laura Reeves:

We just had a thing today. Somebody was talking about when you have a dog that doesn't want to eat and you don't add extra stuff to it, unless of course you're trying to get ready for a dog show. Sometimes a little something, something.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Exactly. And then you get diarrhea.

Laura Reeves:

And I think make your special stuff and put them in ice cube trays and freeze them. And if somebody's sick or if you've got a bitch that you need to eat after puppies or whatever, you can use that extra yummy stuff down the road, if you're like me and sort of a late dated depression era baby.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Right. Well, this is stock. I make those. And I use some at home of course for stock and soups and sauces and so forth. But I also use some of them at the practice when we have dogs that come in to the veterinarian clinics and they're unwilling to eat, reluctant to eat, they're sick, they just don't feel like it. You pull out some of that stock and oh, my goodness. It is the Jewish grandmother's magic recipe for getting people and dogs to eat again.

Laura Reeves:

Okay. So food, judiciously. Incorporate the dog into certain parts of the festivities and not all of them. I used to think it was great fun, and I still think it's great fun for the dogs to get to open their own presents.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Oh, yeah.

Laura Reeves:

Yes. That's the favorite thing. And so what are some of your good ideas about how to make that fun and safe for the dog?

Dr. Marty Greer:

Well make sure that you're getting them paper. No ribbons, no cellophane. Just good old paper. Newspaper's fine. It's inexpensive. Everybody's got some of it laying around.

Laura Reeves:

They don't know that it's not pretty.

Dr. Marty Greer:

They don't care. They don't know that there are supposed to be trees and Santa Clauses on it. So it works pretty well. And of course, it should be something that's kind of fun and smells interesting so that you get their attention. And then of course, you want to make sure that you throw any of those wrappers away so that they don't end up doing it again. But the things that dogs ingest when they're not supposed to unwrap things are the pieces of chocolate candy that we see at Christmas time and Easter and Halloween. The foil on those are really dangerous. The cellophane on those, like I said, the cellophane on the candy canes, any of those can be dangerous. So you want to really be careful that the amount of the paper or plastic material that you give them access to is very, very limited, and that you take it away and get it discarded well out of their way so they're not getting into the garbage overnight and thinking, "Oh, this smells pretty interesting."

We always had something special for them to eat, but it was always something that was limited on the fat and bone. And so with really great care you can really have a great time.

Laura Reeves:

And stockings. I love to have each dog have their own stocking, and it has some cookies in it, dog cookies, or it has some yak chews, my new favorite thing, yak chews. Okay, so here's another one. This is going to make everybody's hair catch on fire, but I think it's something we should talk about. Outfits. Outfits are kind of a 21st century thing. People are putting outfits on dogs that I don't think should have outfits. How do we feel about outfits?

Dr. Marty Greer:

Well, I don't think most dogs are very happy about being dressed in really strange things. But some dogs, not all, will tolerate and will actually appreciate sweaters, things that keep them warm when they're outside or if the house is especially cold. Now, my personal dog, I have a Danish Swedish farm dog, so she is from Sweden. I was going to a training class one night and it was really cold. It was like 20 below zero without the wind chill, so I had a nice little jacket, a little fleece one that I bought that was a dog jacket. And one of my friends with farm dogs said her dogs loved them. I'm like, "Okay, fine." So I put a little jacket on her. I put her in the crate in the back of my car, and I drove to the training class. And when I got to class, she was sitting in the opposite corner as far away from the jacket as she possibly could be. She had peeled the Velcro off, taken it off, put it in the far corner of the crate and looked at me like, "Are you kidding? This is a farm from Sweden. This is not what we do."

So you have to recognize that some dogs are not fans. And I actually had a dog last winter, the clients were new clients, they had this new dog, this young dog that they got, and it wasn't a puppy, but it was a new dog to them. And they'd put this jacket on the dog. And then they called us and they said the dog can't walk. And I said, "Okay, well bring the dog in." Because I'm thinking that she's down, unable to walk, paralyzed. They bring her in, they stand her in the exam room. She stands there and she looks at me and I said, "Okay, so what's going on?" They said she can't walk. I said, "Well, let's take this jacket off." They took the jacket off. She went screaming around the exam room. They put the jacket back on. She's like, "No, I can't walk in this thing." So she was very clear that she was not about to wear one of those.

So we have to respect them to say, look, if this works for you, great, you like to be warm. You want to wear a jacket. We're all in. But if they don't, for heaven's sake, let the dog make up their own mind. They're going to tell you if they're comfortable or uncomfortable in that kind of a device. So really dressing them up, that is truly a pet parent thing, and we're really anthropomorphizing our pets. And I really think that's over and above what most dogs care to do.

Laura Reeves:

Whippets outside of whippets that's about the only dogs I have personally ever had. And even my whippets thought it was stupid. So it's just everybody. My Chihuahua hates it. You try and put an outfit on the Chihuahua, and she is absolutely mortified. You would think the Chihuahua would be completely into it. She's not. So, something to consider, let the dog make their own decision.

Laura Reeves:

And then final piece, final question for no many thousands of dollars. I really do think that one of the things that isn't frequently touched on when we do the whole holiday winter type of information is about salt and de-icer when you have snow events. And while certainly if you live in South Florida, you might not have snow, huge chunk of the country, this is an issue. So let's talk about that. What's safe? What's not? How to handle it when you encounter it.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Sure. And you can use one of two different products. One is cat litter, which is a nice product to have. It tracks in something terrible, but it does give you good traction. It doesn't melt the snow, but it gives good traction to the dogs and to us, when we're outside on the slippery surfaces. You can also keep a bag of it in the back of your car in case you need traction when you get stuck in a snowbank, which I'll tell you on more than one occasion. I've used it as weight to the back of the car, and it gives you something that-

Laura Reeves:

Weigh it down. I was just going to say, yup.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Gives you something to fling out. But there are multiple different kinds of safe paw salt substitutes for ice melting on your sidewalks. So at the veterinary hospital, of course, we use those because we don't want people to fall. We don't want the dogs to fall, and we don't want their feet to be irritated by the salt. If your pet does go onto a part of the sidewalk where there was not a safe product used, when you get home, make sure you wash their feet so that they don't lick it off so that they don't end up with that adhering to their feet and causing them problems. But there are definitely products on the market that you can purchase.

And I was just in Colorado this past week, and they had 14 inches of snow. And I didn't realize that 14 inches of snow in Denver was unusual. For us, that was just a normal amount.

Laura Reeves:

Yeah, that's a lot.

Dr. Marty Greer:

I'm like, "Oh, well, there's still airplanes going in and out of the airport. Everything is cool." No, it totally freaked them out. My brother in law, who's lived in Colorado for 25 years, bought a snowblower. I thought that was unusual. But for me, that was just the normal amount of snow.

So be aware that there are a nice, safe products on the market that you can use. There's a few other things that we want to be really careful about. And that's the antifreeze that you might leave sitting in the garage, because when all of the water sources are frozen, that one is still thawed out and we still do see antifreeze toxicities in dogs and cats. It's a sweet liquid. They will drink it if there's nothing else available to drink. And sometimes even if there is, so be aware that antifreeze. There is a pet safe antifreeze, but most people don't use it in their vehicles because it costs more, and they don't think that they're ever going to have that exposure. But be aware that it's highly toxic. They will go into kidney failure. And unless it's really aggressively treated with IV, hospitalization and IV alcohol, you have to give real alcohol intravenously to compete with. The other product that was on the market for a while is no longer available as an antidote. So if you think there's any possibility, please get your pet right in for fluid therapy and appropriate medication.

Laura Reeves:

Wow. That's a good one. I had forgotten about, hadn't popped up on my list, but good catch. And boots. We did clothes and we did how to avoid ... But boots, when maybe you have a hunting dog or you have a mushing dog or you just like to go hiking in the snow and it gets crusty and the dog's feet get all cut up. What's our thinking on boots?

Dr. Marty Greer:

They do make some really nice ones. The ones that we've always used have been the ones that are actually the Iditarod boots. They're made out of a fleece product with a stretchy Velcro that goes around it. Now, you can't leave those on the dog's feet when they're inactive because the Velcro is tight enough that it will cause swelling in their feet. But a lot of dogs will tolerate those really well when the weather is cold, and they do appreciate those if you get them on and get them out walking right away. If you leave them sitting in the house for 10 minutes while you go get the leash and the treats and get the kids bundled up and all those other things, yeah. They're not going to tolerate it, but they can be very, very useful. And we quite literally have purchased ours from the mushers that run the Iditarod. There are people that make those and sell those, but you can buy them out of fleece, you can buy them made out of cordoba. There's a lot of different products on the market, and they work well and they are safe. And that sharp snow, that frozen icy stuff can really be tough on feet. So be aware that when they're out, that's a problem.

Actually, this also brings up the fact that the worst time to have the dog out for an extended period of time is when the snow is slushy. So it's right at that 30 to 32 degree temperature. That's when we tend to see the most frostbite because the feet get wet or the scrotum gets wet or the belly gets wet. And then they get really, really uncomfortable because that all just freezes and thaws and freezes, and it makes a real mess. So it's actually better to have them out walking when it's super cold and you keep moving pretty fast with boots on, as opposed to going out and kind of hanging around, shoveling the sidewalk when that slushy stuff is sticking to that skin.

Laura Reeves:

Yeah. That, and the one that I always hated when I was in the Midwest was when it would get super duper cold and the dog would come out from inside and their pads would literally freeze to the concrete sidewalk. That just, oh, I hate that. That foot cramp thing.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Yep. Yep. So you got to be really careful with those things as well. So we can do lots of things to keep them safe. If they just need to run out and go potty and run back in, that's great. But if you are going to go out for a hike or for an extended walk, just really be thoughtful about the temperatures and how it would feel if you were out there without your boots on. So with some care, you can very safely get good exercise when it's cold out, but try to do it when it's at the least most terrible times. So when the wind isn't so terrible and when the frost and the slushy stuff isn't so terrible so that your pets can enjoy being out there and not just look at you like, "Oh, I have to endure this terrible walk with her again."

Laura Reeves:

Right. We want them to think that hanging out with us is a good thing.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Exactly.

Laura Reeves:

Exactly. All right. Well, Merry Christmas, happy holidays to everyone out there. Thank you very much, Marty, for joining us. And can't wait to talk to you next month. We've got some interesting stuff to talk about then.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Sounds great. Thank you so much for having me

As always. If you have any questions or input, we'd love to hear from you. The show notes and links to resources on today's topic are available at. puredogtalk.com. Drop us a note in the comments or email to laura@puredogtalk.com. Remember guys, this podcast is for you. So if you want to know something, give me a holler. We'll do a podcast for you. If you wouldn't mind, you could help me out here. Take a couple minutes to visit iTunes and give us a review.

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