

Advice for New Pet Owners During Festive Break 2011

Every year as we approach Xmas Sunny Harbour Cat Rescue and hundreds of other rescues throughout the UK will begin to receive the annual calls from Parents who have “promised their child a kitten for Xmas”... Sunny Harbour Cat Rescue hope the following advice on integrating these pets and protecting them during the festive season will help these new pet owners.

Ideally we would like to see people consider taking on a new animal as a family decision. To consider the responsibility associated with the adoption of a cat or kitten. Not as a festive ‘surprise’.

If you really must get a cat or kitten for Xmas then remember cats are living, breathing, sentient animals who feel fear, pain, anxiety and worry. Sarah Ross of Sunny Harbour Cat Rescue said “The reason Sunny Harbour Cat Rescue don’t adopt to families over the Xmas period and wait until the new year is due to many considerations but is mostly to protect our charges from needless stress. We would ask that should you still get a kitten for Xmas you consider the impact and dangers for the animal you are introducing” Sunny Harbour Cat Rescue are urging readers to follow the advice given very carefully to ensure a happy, injury free Xmas for the family and especially any new animal in the home;

- Do not buy or adopt a kitten under a minimum of 10 weeks old. It is critical that kittens remain with their siblings until 10 weeks so that they can fully develop their sight, mobility, strength and most importantly their social skills. Without these skills it increases the likelihood of said kitten maturing into a reserved, timid adult cat rather than an integrated member of the family.
- Don’t give the kitten full run of the house. Provide them with a safe space / room where their food, toys & litter box are. The more space they have the more chance there is of increasing their anxiety and creating confusion over the litter box. Restricting access in the house for a couple of weeks will help to reduce this and prevent stress related litter box issues.
- When cats settle into their new homes they explore using sight, sound and scent. The noise, existing animals, past animals, new people, colours,

flashing lights and smells generated over the Xmas period can be exceptionally confusing for an adult cat never mind a kitten. Combine this with an equally strange home environment and a kitten just learning to see, hear and interact and you have a very nervous kitten on your hands. This combined with excited children running around the home makes for a very stressful and hazardous environment for a kitten.

- To avoid injury, excessive and needless stress for your kitten then keep them in their 'safe space' with all their belongings until the house has calmed down again. E.g. when you have visitors round or the children are opening presents or just generally being over excited then place the kitten into a safe, quiet place until the house is calmer.
- Never play with kittens with tinsel as small pieces may be ingested or they may choke on them. Always keep tinsel well out of their reach and away from the bottom of the tree.
- Avoid the use of breakable or glass baubles on the tree as kittens love to climb and play on Xmas trees. Instead go for plastic or tin / aluminium which won't easily break and cause injury and make sure that at least the bottom 2 branches all round are clear of decorations.
- Preferably opt for a synthetic tree not a real tree if you can to avoid eye injuries to kittens from sharp pine needles
- Never feed your cat or kitten or puppy any left over cooked meats. The bones are dry and brittle and may snap and lodge in the animal's fragile throat and cause injury as well as getting stuck. Surgery to fix such an avoidable injury may run into several hundreds of pounds.

Sarah Ross said "We also recommend that owners with little disposable income taking on a pet at Xmas take out Pet Insurance to ensure that should their pet suffer any injury, illness or ingest something they shouldn't, that they can seek timely veterinary assistance without worrying about cost."

Lastly bear in mind cats love and rely on routine. The festive break is the time of year when your daily routine couldn't be more out of tune. This can make

life doubly confusing for a tiny kitten as your family as you get caught up in the festivities and impromptu social gatherings.

Not to mention the huge feeling of loneliness when you go back to work and the kids to school and they are left on their own all day.



A little sad face waiting on you getting home...

Sarah Ross of Sunny Harbour Cat Rescue said “This is 1 of they key reasons we specifically wait until the 2nd week of January before we restart adoptions. By then you are back at work and the kids at school and a set family routine is once again being established. This enables your kitten to work out where they fit into the family and routine in a safe, calm atmosphere.”

Sarah finishes by saying “ Do remember that these small kittens will need vaccination at 9 and 12 weeks and neutering around March time to keep them healthy and happy. If you require advice please contact Sunny Harbour Cat Rescue”.

We hope everyone has a very happy, safe Xmas and considers these points before adding to their family this Christmas.

From All at Sunny Harbour Cat Rescue

A Very Merry Xmas