

Don't let Christmas fun and frivolities cause stress for your pets

London Animal Home reminds owners the holidays can overwhelm cats and dogs and to understand signs of stress instead of discarding them if they don't fit in

- The Mayhew Animal Home in North West London is sending out a message to pet owners this festive season to take time out to think about the effect any celebrations might have on the household animals.

Some pets can become extremely distressed by loud noises, the unexpected arrival of strangers in their house and disruption to their routine. Christmas is also never the time to think about getting a new pet, as they will find it difficult to adapt to an unpredictable environment.

Rescue centres see an influx of unwanted and abandoned pets after Christmas and behavioural reasons can sometimes be the reason cited. More time spent understanding the needs of a dog or cat can prevent undesirable behaviours such as inappropriate toileting and becoming destructive when stressed.

Mayhew Animal Care Manager, Gillian Rich said: *"Sadly, many pet owners don't put enough thought into what is best for every member of their family; and this includes any pets. As soon as a cat or dog displays any undesirable behaviours then owners can be quick to cart them off to a rescue centre but in fact the pet may just be displaying signs of stress as they can't understand what is happening in their environment."*

Advice from The Mayhew for a happy home for pets and people this Christmas:

-Make sure your cat or dog has a comfortable quiet place to retreat to if things get a little noisy or hectic. Ideally a separate room in the house so that if they want to escape they are not trapped in a room with strangers.

- If introducing people for the first time to a dog in the family, make sure they approach quietly and let the dog smell their hand before moving in to stroke them. Make sure the introduction is positive and the dog isn't overwhelmed by people approaching from behind, or all at once.

-Keep dogs separate when people are eating and don't encourage anyone to feed them, in particular children, as the presence of lots of food can cause great excitement to a family dog which can encourage grabby or nippy behaviours.

-If visiting friends or relatives are bringing their own cat or dog then make sure that canine introductions have been made away from the home as territorial issues can arise. Cats will be incredibly frightened by the presence of a dog in the house, so two separate areas must be kept safe and completely secure for each animal.

-Never leave any children alone with pets in the house.

ENDS

For the Editor

The Mayhew Animal Home was established in 1886 for the benefit of "the lost and starving dogs and cats of London so that they should have sanctuary from the cold inhumanity they are being dealt outside". Today, The Mayhew is one of the busiest animal sanctuaries in London, rescuing thousands of animals from cruelty and neglect each year. We provide shelter and care for cats, dogs, rabbits and when the need arises, for a wide variety of other animals.

The Mayhew Animal Home strives to tackle the companion animal welfare crisis from every possible angle. The organisation is pro-active, innovative and continually works to assist animals and their carers. We aim to set the standards in animal welfare. The Mayhew offers a wide variety of community services providing advice, care and assistance to animals and their carers whatever their circumstances.