

Boarding's the best bet for pet

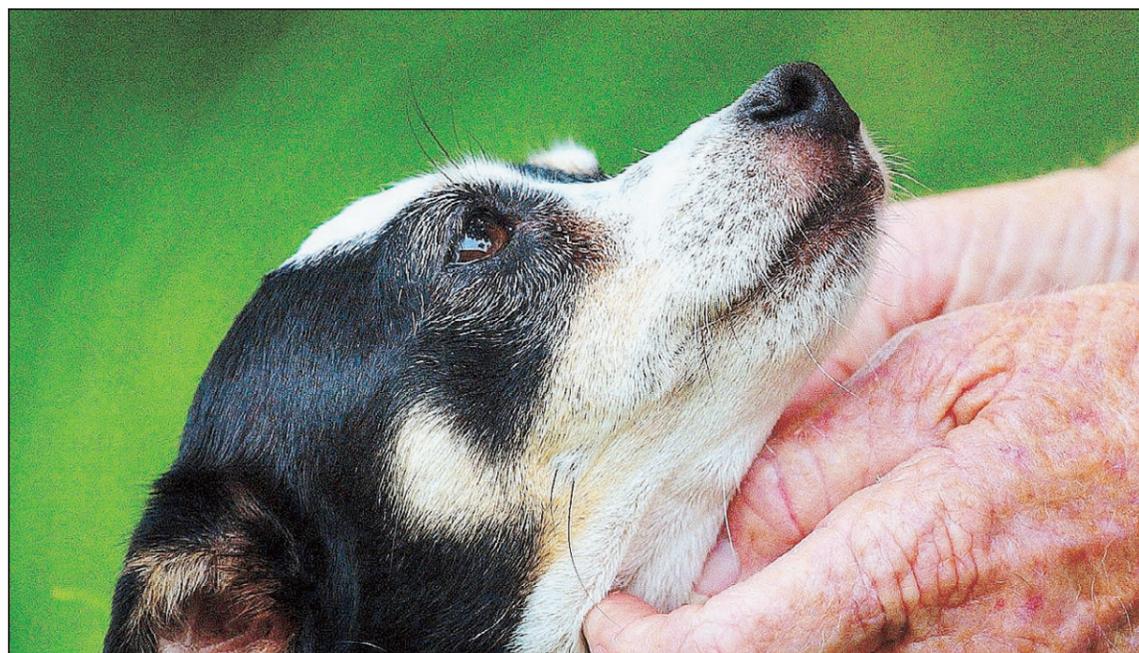
Gordon Veterinary Hospital's Dr Gretta Howard tells how to keep pets safe and happy throughout the holidays.

Q: What should I do about my pet while I'm on holidays?

A: Unless you have a house-sitter to look after your animals for you it is not recommended to leave your pets unsupervised while you are away. The paralysis tick is a real threat to North Shore pets due to the abundance of its natural hosts – possums and bandicoots. The first signs of tick paralysis are often subtle, and include a change in voice (hoarse or loss of bark or meow), slight changes in breathing and mild weakness. These early signs could easily be missed by someone dropping in to do the feeding, and affected pets can become critically ill very quickly. Behavioural concerns like separation anxiety and storm phobias can obviously be heightened with absent owners. Many stray dogs we have brought to us have escaped their yards when their owners are on holidays.

How do I choose a boarding facility?

Get in early. School holiday periods fill up quickly. Check out the premises before you book or at least get a good reference. Ensure animals are kept clean and comfortable and ask what type of food they get. For older pets or those needing medications or special diets, a vet



TAKE CARE: Signs of paralysis tick mightn't be noticed by someone feeding your animal while you're away.

hospital may be a better option.

What do I need to do before I drop my pet to the boarding facility?

Check which particular vaccination is required and ensure it is up to date. Your pet should also be de-wormed and have flea and tick prevention. Maybe next time you can take your dog on holiday too! Check out the book *Holidaying with Dogs* – a dog-friendly accommodation directory for Australia.

What sort of presents should I give my pets at Christmas-time?

Chewable treats like Greenies, raw hide chews and toys such as Kongs or Buster Cubes are great for dog presents. Avoid tennis balls which can wear down the teeth. Cats love a new fluffy bed, scratching post or a laser pointer to chase around (a very easy way to exercise your cat). **What things should my pet avoid?** While it may be amusing to watch, don't let your cat or dog "unwrap"

the present because this creates confusion as to what your pet is and isn't allowed to do at home. They don't know it's Christmas!

- Avoid heat stroke by only exercising early morning or dusk. Don't forget shade and fresh water.
- Foods with sultanas, grapes and raisins (which can lead to kidney failure), so no Christmas cake. And no fatty foods such as ham off-cuts or barbecue leftovers (pancreatitis). Chocolate can be dangerous, too.

Candles lit? Now let's sing

STARS set to shine at the popular *Carols by Candlelight* at Sydney Adventist Hospital include David Harris (pictured) and Silvie Paladino. Harris, fast becoming one of the leading men in Australian musical theatre, is now performing in *Little Women* at the Seymour Centre.



Paladino is well-known for her performances in the annual Myer Music Bowl Carols and her roles in *Les Miserables*, *Cats*, *Hair* and *Mamma Mia*. Also on stage will be talented performers The Sunday Drivers, Laura Hibbert and Wahroonga Adventist School Choir. Thousands of people are expected to attend *Carols by Candlelight*. It will be a festive family event with activities for children, animal displays, a Plaster Funhouse and the Sanitarium Weet-Bix Children's Concert, featuring Alvin and the Chipmunks. The grand finale will include the *Hallelujah* chorus and a fireworks spectacular. *Carols by Candlelight* will be held on Sunday, December 14, at the Sydney Adventist Hospital, Fox Valley Rd, Wahroonga. Entry is free.

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Have a Green Christmas



Think green over the festive season and reduce, reuse and recycle to minimise your impact on the environment.

Home-made gift ideas:

- Jams, chutneys, biscuits
- A family recipe book
- Art and craft
- Body scrub (1 cup sea salt, ½ cup grape seed or rice bran oil, 5 drops lavender oil)



Eco-friendly gifts:

- Solar powered torch
- Compost bin or worm farm
- Basket of fruit
- Seeds plants and herbs



Help others:

- Donate to charity
- Sponsor a child

Reduce your waste during the festive season:

- Buy a worm farm, compost bin or bokashi bucket to dispose of food scraps
- Reuse decorations such as ribbons and bows
- Use reusable containers, plates, cutlery and glasses
- Buy a Christmas tree with roots, and plant it in the garden for next year
- Use last year's cards to make this year's gift tags
- Buy recycled wrapping paper or reusable gift bags



Wrapping paper (non-metallic), greeting cards and cardboard packaging are recyclable so put them in your recycling bin.

Visit www.willoughby.nsw.gov.au or phone 9777 1000 for more sustainable living tips.