

# Beating Winter Boredom

As winter settles in, keeping our furry friends entertained and mentally stimulated becomes a priority to prevent boredom and its associated behaviors, such as anxiety, inappropriate chewing, and eating items they shouldn't. Here are some creative ways to beat winter boredom for your pets:

1. **Interactive Toys and Puzzles:** Invest in toys that challenge your pet's mind. Puzzle feeders or toys that dispense treats can keep them engaged as they work to uncover the hidden rewards.
2. **Indoor Playtime:** On particularly chilly days, transform your living room into a play zone. Set up a mini obstacle course or play a game of fetch down the hallway to burn off some energy.
3. **Training Sessions:** Use the extra indoor time to teach your pet new tricks or reinforce basic commands. This not only provides mental stimulation but also strengthens your bond.
4. **Scent Games:** Hide treats around the house and encourage your pet to use their nose to find them. This taps into their natural instincts and provides a fun challenge.
5. **Window Watching:** Create a cozy spot by the window where your pet can watch the world go by. This can be especially entertaining for cats and small dogs.
6. **Music or TV for Pets:** Consider leaving on some pet-friendly music or a TV show designed for animals to keep them company while you're out.

By incorporating these activities into your winter routine, you can help keep your pet happy and healthy, reducing the likelihood of boredom-induced behavior. Remember, a little creativity goes a long way in ensuring a joyful winter for both you and your pet!



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## Upcoming Cautions

Common winter dangers include ice melt and antifreeze, both of which can be toxic to pets.

To prevent issues, use pet-safe ice melt products and always wipe your pet's paws after walks. Antifreeze is particularly dangerous due to its sweet taste; ensure it's secured and any spills are promptly cleaned. Additionally, frostbite can affect pets left outside for too long in cold weather, so monitor them for any signs of discomfort.

As we move into spring, be vigilant about your cleaning products, keeping them out of reach and opting for non-toxic items to keep your pets safe. Keep your Valentine's chocolate and candy picked up and out of reach. Lastly, when gardening, choose pet-safe fertilizers and safely store any chemicals.

## Grain-Free Fears

Grain-free dog foods, often high in certain types of peas, lentils, and potatoes, have been linked to an increased incidence of dilated cardiomyopathy (DCM) in specific breeds, such as Golden Retrievers and Doberman Pinschers.

While the exact cause remains under investigation, the lack of essential nutrients, particularly taurine (which is vital for heart health) may play a crucial role.

If you are unsure the best food for your dog, please give us a call. We can help determine the best nutritional plan for your pet's specific needs, ensuring they receive a balanced diet that supports overall health and decreases the risk of developing serious conditions like DCM. Remember, a well-informed choice can lead to a healthier, happier dog.



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New Year  
2025



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newsletters  
digitally.



## Integrating New Pets into the Home



Bringing a new pet home is exciting but requires planning. Here are tips for integrating them with existing pets and children:

### \*With Other Pets:\*\*

1. **Gradual Introduction:** Start by keeping the new pet in a separate room and swap bedding to help them get used to each other's scents.
2. **Controlled Meetings:** Arrange brief, supervised meetings in a neutral space using leashes for safety.
3. **Positive Reinforcement:** Reward all pets with treats for calm behavior to create positive associations.
4. **Separate Resources:** Give each pet their own food, beds, and toys to reduce territorial issues.

### \*With Children:\*\*

1. **Education:** Teach children to approach the new pet gently and quietly.
2. **Set Boundaries:** Create rules for how to interact with the pet.
3. **Supervision:** Always supervise young children during interactions for safety.
4. **Involvement:** Let children help with pet care tasks to encourage bonding.



Following these steps will help your new pet feel welcome and ensure a happy family experience.

## Arthritis Care

Arthritis is a common condition in pets, particularly in older dogs and cats. It is characterized by inflammation and pain in the joints. Understanding arthritis involves recognizing its symptoms, which may include limping, decreased activity, difficulty climbing stairs, reluctance to jump, and changes in behavior, such as increased irritability or withdrawal. A veterinary diagnosis is essential to determine the type and severity of arthritis, guiding treatment options. Managing arthritis effectively requires a multi-faceted approach.

Common management strategies include weight reduction to minimize strain on joints, customized exercise regimens to maintain mobility without exacerbating pain, and the use of anti-inflammatory medications, pain relievers, and/or monoclonal antibody therapy. Additionally, nutraceuticals such as glucosamine, chondroitin, and omega-3 fatty acids can support joint health. Alternative options, including physical therapy, acupuncture, and hydrotherapy, may also provide relief.

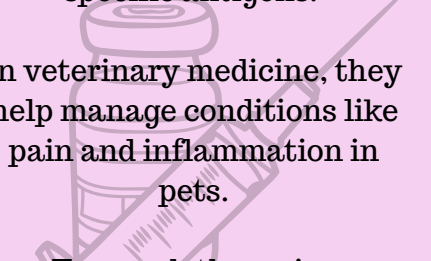
By implementing a comprehensive care plan, pet owners can help improve their furry companions' quality of life and maintain their mobility for as long as possible.

## Monoclonal Antibodies

Monoclonal antibodies are engineered to mimic the immune system by targeting specific antigens.

In veterinary medicine, they help manage conditions like pain and inflammation in pets.

Two such therapies, Solensia and Librela, target nerve growth factor to reduce osteoarthritis pain in cats and dogs. They offer long-lasting relief with fewer side effects compared to traditional pain medications.



## Food Allergies? Try an Elimination Diet.

An elimination diet is a vital method for allergy testing in dogs and cats, especially effective in winter when environmental allergens are at their lowest. This controlled dietary approach helps pinpoint specific food allergies or intolerances by completely removing common allergens from your pet's diet, allowing for careful observation of any changes in symptoms, such as itching, gastrointestinal issues, or skin problems. To enhance the effectiveness of the elimination diet, using a food formulated with hydrolyzed proteins is highly recommended. Hydrolyzed protein diets contain proteins that have been broken down into smaller, non-allergenic components, making them less likely to provoke an allergic response while still providing necessary nutrients.

For optimal results, feed this specialized diet exclusively for about 8-12 weeks, being vigilant to avoid any treats, flavored medications, or human foods, as these could introduce additional allergens. After the initial diet period, you can start to gradually reintroduce old food items one at a time, monitoring closely for any allergic reactions, which helps to identify specific triggers. This approach not only helps in diagnosing allergies but also fosters better overall health by promoting a balanced, tailored diet.

Always consult with us before starting an elimination diet to ensure it is appropriate and safe for your pet's particular needs, given their health history and nutritional requirements. We also have detailed handouts to provide more information and help you on this journey.

## Location Reminder

As a reminder, we have CLOSED our Lafayette location. You can now find us ONLY at our West side location. We are at the top of the hill, right next to GoodWill.

Same great staff, providing the same great care.

M-F 8a-5p  
Sat - 8a-1p

180 Sagamore Pkwy W,  
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## Our Food Recommendations

When it comes to choosing the right food for your furry friends, selecting a high-quality brand is crucial for their health and well-being. Among our top recommended dog and cat food brands are Hills Science Diet, Royal Canin, Iams, and ProPlan. All four brands are well-regarded for their quality and nutritional value, making them a great starting point for pet owners looking to feed their pets a healthy and nutritious diet.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulates pet food; while the World Small Animal Veterinary Association (WSAVA) and the Association of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO) also provide guidelines for pet food. It is best to avoid any food that does not have their stamps of approval.

During new food introduction, it's essential to transition slowly to avoid digestive upset. A gradual change over 7 to 10 days allows your pet's system to adjust to the new diet effectively. Start by mixing a small amount of the new food with your pet's current food, gradually increasing the ratio of the new food while decreasing the old. For example, during the first few days, you might use 25% new food and 75% old food, and then modify it to 50/50 by the end of the week. Always monitor your pet's reactions, including any changes in digestion or behavior, to ensure they are adapting well.