



Gasp! It's Holiday Season

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September is here and children are back in school. Soon, in parts of the country, the leaves will be changing colors and the air will turn crisp. In the marketing world, that means it's time to prepare for the holiday season.

There are four big holidays to prepare for *now* in order to make sure tails keep walking through your doors *then*. Let's look at these holidays and ideas that your practice can start to implement now.

Halloween

October really is a build-up to the one day at the end of the month. Many opportunities exist to reach out to current and future pet owners to have conversations about Halloween. Online and offline options exist and, really, a combination of both should be used. For example:

- Present in schools about what animals can and cannot eat around this holiday season. Discuss how pets can be kept safe and where candy should be stored. Talk about where Fido should be when the door is repeatedly opened for trick-or-treaters. Bring a list of safety tips to give to children to take home to their parents.
- The same tips can be used as a blog or blogs on the hospital's website. Consider blogging about safety tips on Halloween night, what to feed Fido, what happens if a pet eats chocolate or whether or not pets should go trick-or-treating.
- Create Facebook posts linking to the blogs to help spread the word.
- Hold a pet Halloween costume contest on Facebook where people can showcase their animals and win a prize.
- Update Google My Business with a note linking to the blog posts that were created.

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- Make sure to post ER addresses and numbers everywhere for people to grab quickly if need-be on Halloween night!

Meanwhile, beginning around the third week of October, it is okay to drop a nibble here or there about the upcoming Thanksgiving holiday.

Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving can be joyous, stressful or both. Travel can play a big part in this holiday, as well as food and relatives. A practice can help give tips and tricks to help their current and future pet parents navigate this holiday with success. Some ideas are:

- Blog posts on “Food to Feed Fido,” “Preparing the House for Family Members Who Don’t ‘Get’ Pets,” “Traveling to Grandma’s House with Your Pet,” and “Boarding Your Pet for the Holidays—What You Need to Know.”
- Facebook posts and boosts should be made to promote these blog posts.
- Hold Thanksgiving-themed contests on Facebook, such as “Dress Your Pet Like a Turkey or a Pilgrim” costume contest.

- Post on Facebook with single to-do tips to prepare for the holidays like, at the beginning of the month, “Have You Made Your Thanksgiving Boarding Appointment Yet?” Or, remind people to order their pet meds early and not wait until 5 p.m. on Wednesday.
- Update Google My Business page with holiday hours and “notecards” that link to a new blog post each week.

Right on the heels of Thanksgiving are Hanukkah and Christmas. In fact, in November, it would be a good idea to start talking about boarding for the December and New Year’s holidays.

Christmas and Hanukkah

Ah, the joys of the December holidays, with lighted candles, sparkling gifts and food-laden tables. It almost looks like a Hallmark commercial until the pet yanks the ham off the table, the cat meanders through the candles on the windowsill, and the Christmas tree becomes a play toy for the new puppy. There is much to discuss with your pet parents in this last month of the year.

- Blog posts such as “Why a New Pet as a Holiday Gift Might Not Be the Best Choice,” “Keeping the Wrapping Paper *on* the Presents and Not *in* Your Pet’s Belly,” “Cookies are for Santa, Not for Fido,” “What Holiday Gifts to Buy for the Fur Babies,” etc.



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- Have an in-house photo session with Santa and his elves and give out the photos to pet owners. Then, showcase these photos on Facebook and Instagram, after first grabbing the permission of the pet owner!
- Make sure to link the blog posts to Facebook.
- Use Facebook posts or blogs to give travel, safety or winter weather tips for Fido.
- Update Google My Business with holiday hours.
- Update website and Facebook with local ER numbers and addresses.

Did you forget about pets and the New Year? Most people do. In the middle of December, it's time to integrate information about New Year's and pet safety.

New Year's Eve

Humans see the New Year as a time for parties, food, drinks and fun. Pets can see it as loud noises, people who don't follow regular patterns, and easy pickings from the food table. New Year's marketing to pet parents is more about safety. For example:

- Messages on Facebook, blogs and email blasts should be around "Having a Party? Board Your Pet. It is Safer for Your Pet and Guests," "Fido and Fireworks—Do They Mix?" "Alcohol and Fluffy—What to Know," "Can Pets Smoke Weed Too?" or "Intoxicated People and Pets—What to Know."
- Update holiday hours on the website and Google My Business. Make sure to update hours anywhere else they are located.

Holidays can be a blast if thought is put into them weeks, not moments, before they occur. As a local business and a trusted caregiver of a family's loved ones, you can assist in making the holidays joyous.

Want help filling up your boarding for the holidays? We have filled hospitals' boarding facilities to capacity in previous holiday seasons. Want to make sure tails come through the door? Give us a call. Marketing done right matters greatly. Beyond Indigo has been conducting internet marketing for 22 years. Our CEO and COO have each been working in marketing online for 24 years. Our team knows the old and the new, as well as how to generate revenue. We focus on results first and discuss costs second. We are committed to staying up-to-date with the changing online environment, such as ADA compliance. Plus, we are Google Ads Partners, and we know how to build Google mobile-friendly and fast websites. Need help creating a marketing plan? Call 877.244.9322, ext. 100, or go to <https://www.beyondindigopets.com/contact/>.

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Kelly Baltzell, M.A. is President and CEO of the Beyond Indigo family of companies which she founded in 1997. Beyond Indigo is a full-service marketing company focusing on Search Engine Optimization, is a Google Adwords Partner, Social Media Marketing, Online Reviews and websites. She has been a monthly columnist for MWI Animal Health since 2011. She has also presented and been published in Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the UK.

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