



Paws Up For Pets: Early efforts can alleviate holiday stress for you and your pet

Posted by [Deborah Hartz](#) on November 30, 2011 at 12:00pm

[View Blog](#)



JoJo Harder sits with her miniature Italian greyhound, Romeo.

Photo by Jerry Lower

By Arden Moore

For years, Jo Jo Harder wowed the fashion world with her signature clothing line showcased in fine stores throughout the country. Today, her fashion talents have gone to the dogs in a very diva and delightful way.

Meet Harder, the creator of America's Top Dog Model Contest and author of the first style book for dogs, aptly called *Diva Dogs: A Style Guide to Living the Fabulous Life*. She is the go-to gal when it comes to dishing out advice to keep the upcoming holidays sane, safe and sensational for your canine pal.

This Boca Raton resident happily shares her home with Romeo, a fetchingly handsome miniature Italian greyhound who scores invitations to the most coveted canine soirees up and down the Palm Beach coast.

"Romeo is so mellow, eager to please and very smart," describes Harder. "He goes everywhere with me and is very well mannered and charming. And, I must confess, he has quite a wardrobe because he has modeled in a few fashion shows."

If you're looking to score an invite for your dog to any of the popular canine parties this holiday season, heed Harder's advice:

- Hone your doggy manners at home. Enroll your dog in an obedience class with a professional certified trainer who subscribes to positive training techniques. Practice those skills at home. "Proper petiquette starts at home. A true diva dog puts her best paw forward in any social situation," says Harder.
- Shop early. Don't procrastinate in shopping for an outfit for your dog to attend a "top dog" event. "Shop now so you won't add stress to the holiday season by waiting until the last minute," she says.
- Look festive. Choose classic styles in holiday colors for outfits and accessories, but be a bit creative. "Don't settle for red or green and look for dog-sized neckties for males and dog-sized strands of pearls for females," she suggests. "Make sure your dog can move easily in the outfit and that he likes wearing it before you dash out to a party."
- Clean up your act. "Party dogs should arrive groomed, bathed and with their nails trimmed," she says.

"They definitely should not have doggy breath. If you have time, call a few of your friends to bring their dogs and spend the day pampering them at a doggy spa."

- Give back. True diva dogs do their best to give to those less fortunate canines. Enter a holiday dog walk event or participate in fundraising events to benefit animal shelters and rescue groups.

Whether you are bringing your dog to a holiday party or hosting one at home, let me share a few more ways you can keep the holidays safe and stress-free:

- Maintain your dog's daily walks or play times. A tired dog is a happy dog, and the both of you can benefit from a little exercise that provides a suitable outlet for pent-up energy. If you can't walk your dog, hire a professional dog walker during the holidays.
- Keep your cherished holiday ornaments, statutes and family heirlooms out of reach of wagging tails, nosy noses and swiping paws.
- Avoid edible decorations, such as popcorn or candy canes. These items can cause stomach upsets in dogs.
- Opt for battery-operated candles instead of lit candles that can cause burns to pets.
- Replace tinsel on the Christmas tree with nontoxic baby's breath.
- Set up a room in your house where your pets can hang out while you host a holiday party. Provide healthy treats, water, comfortable bedding and a keep-busy toy and turn on the radio or television in that room to offset the party sounds.

Holidays can be anxiety-filled times for your pets. The best way to pamper them during these times of celebrations is to protect them from harm and to give them plenty of calm reassurance and TLC.

Diva Dogs - Mark Your Calendar

If you're looking for great upcoming dog events, Jo Jo Harder keeps tabs of them on her America's Top Dog Model site at www.americastopdog.com.

She offers an eco-friendly holiday gift idea with her 2012 America's Top Dog Model contest calendar. This year's theme is "Go Green with Style." The calendar, priced at \$13.99, features fashionable Fidos and offers Diva Dog tips.

Finally, sniff around the site for contest rules on how you can enter your dog in the 2012 dog model contest. Good luck!