

10 ways to keep your dog happy this winter

1. Stay connected

Sometimes during the cold and rainy winter months, the last thing you feel like is taking your dog for a walk. However, your friend is going to go out of her mind unless she gets her daily mental stimulation and exercise. Training your dog indoors is proven to be very effective. Without the distraction of other dogs, people and new smells it is a perfect way to work on basic obedience such as 'sit', 'stay', 'search' and other useful tricks. Making your dog use it's brain will keep it happier, calmer and more balanced.

2. Stay warm

Make sure you have your backyard set up for winter too. If you keep your dog outside it is important that you have a space, sheltered from wind and rain, for it to curl up in. If your dog is not a 'chewer', a great tip is to put a big piece of flat styrofoam under the bedding for extra insulation.



Photo: Svea Dogs

3. Stay active

Dog owners are amongst the most healthy people. We always get out and about, no matter what the weather's like! There are so many great ways to stay active during the winter. In fact, it's actually the season when your dog has more energy to run around for longer, and it would be a shame to miss out on an opportunity to activate your dog!

4. Stay hydrated

Always make sure you carry fresh drinking water on your walks. We normally associate dehydration with hot summers days. But the reality is that your dog can get dehydrated even in the winter. Your dog is likely to run around more than you so sometimes we forget just how much they move.

5. Stay focused

Treasure hunt is a fun game that can be played indoors as well as outdoors. Hide your dogs' favourite toy, some delicious treats or even dinner in the house or around the garden. Start simple with easy hiding spots and advance in time when she has figured out the game. You can even play hide and seek and let your dog find you! This is a great way to keep both nose and brain busy.

6. Stay furry

We love dog coats, but why not use the natural coat and let your dog get a bit furry this winter?! While it is good idea to keep your dog clean and trimmed around the face, bottom and feet it is unnecessary to cut off all of your dog's natural protection. The same thing applies to your dogs' bath routine. Make sure you don't wash your dog too often during the cold season. It washes out the natural fat in the coat that keeps your dog warm.

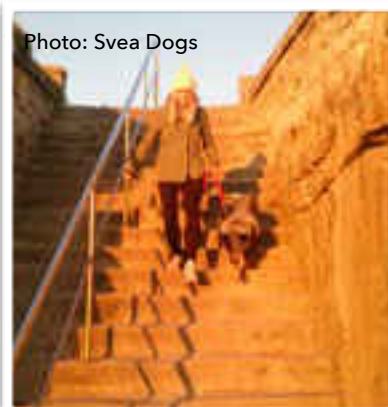


Photo: Svea Dogs

7. Stay dry

Even if most people prefer the warm weather, many dogs actually love rainy, cooler days. However on these days it is vital to let your dog warm up before you start throwing a ball or getting them to run around, especially if your dog suffers from joint injuries or arthritis. There are really good raincoats nowadays that will keep your dog warm and dry in the park. Always dry your dog off when returning home and if you're leaving your dog outside during the day, swap to a dry warm coat.

Svea Dogs

8. Stay healthy

Some people exercise less and eat more in winter. Don't let this happen to your dog! An overfed dog is not a happy dog (despite what they would like you to believe!). Being overweight doesn't only make it hard for her to move around and enjoy life, it can also cause serious conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease. Decreased stamina and liver function, digestive disorder, skin and coat problems and increased risk of cancer are other potential negative side effects of obesity in dogs. A good way to make sure your dog stays within its healthy weight range is to regularly weigh her. You can do it every time you visit your vet. Nowadays some pet shops provide weighing facilities as well. If your dog is above her healthy weight range, now is the time to review diet and exercise routines.

9. Stay outdoorsy

In summer we have our routines, centring around the beach, the cafe, or the park. Winter is a great opportunity to get out and break the mould. While National Parks generally do not allow dogs, there are so many fantastic public spaces around Sydney where dogs are allowed. Put on a coat and take your dog somewhere new. New smells and sights stimulate your dog. Get some fresh air! Take the opportunity to include your dog on family activities. Bring her along to your kids' soccer practice or when walking them to school.

10. Stay close

Is there a better time than the winter to snuggle up with your best friend in front of the heater?! It is important to give your dog affection and closeness as well as exercise and mental stimulation. It is also proven that owners who spend a lot of time with their dogs are happier people!



Photo: Svea Dogs