



Dear friends,



Welcome to our December Newsletter from www.bestdoggietips.com. We hope you enjoy the newsletter.

Merry Christmas to you and your doggie families from Hamish and all of us here at BestDoggieTips.

(We'll be taking a break in January, so your next doggie newsletter will arrive early February)

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We have to make a decision that we will not live our life in a way that will take away the enjoyment of life for another person. – *Muhammad Yunus*

Recipe - Christmas Bone Treats

Ingredients

1 cup wholewheat flour
1 cup soy flour
½ cup wheat germ
½ cup corn meal
½ cup nonfat dry milk
½ cup dry nutritional yeast flakes(from Health Food Store)
¼ cup cooking oil
1 egg
¾ cup water or broth

To Make

Preheat oven to moderate (170°C or 325°F for a gas oven, 190°C or 360°F for an electric oven).

Place dry ingredients in large bowl and mix together well. Crack egg into a separate bowl and beat lightly. Add oil, and water. Combine wet and soft ingredients and mix well.

Now place the mixture on a floured surface and divide into two. Take one of the two pieces and roll out until it is around ¼" thick. Cut out dog bone shapes using a cookie cutter (or you could use seasonal shapes such as angels and Christmas trees). Now repeat with the other piece of dough.

Place onto baking trays lined with baking paper (or spray cooking oil) and bake for 25-30 min until well browned on the bottom. Remove from trays and allow to cool.

Decorate with red ribbon and tie a couple of them to your Christmas tree (but high enough up so that your friend cannot reach them)! Makes 24.

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Is Santa Visiting Your Dogs?

More than half of U.S. dog owners plan to buy their pet a holiday gift, according to a recent poll

Dogs across the country can expect some bone-shaped presents under the Christmas tree this year.

An Associated Press-Petside.com poll shows 52 percent of pet owners plan to buy their animals a holiday gift — up from 43 percent last year.

The AP-Petside.com poll found that six in 10 of those who own only dogs planned on shopping for their pet for the holidays. Forty percent of those with only cats planned to pet shop.

Plush holiday-themed toys are very popular with pet owners, as are candy cane-shaped rawhide chews, said Jessica Douglas, a spokeswoman for the PetSmart pet supply store chain based in Phoenix, Arizona.

Popular clothes at this time of year include a Santa suit, a Mrs. Claus dress and reindeer costumes. A lot of boots are sold to dog owners in cold weather states. Bling-wise, collars and leads are popular.

"Some ID tags are decorated with sparkly embellishments and they can be personalized so it's not just for looks," she said.

According to the poll, 62 percent of female owners said they would probably buy their pet a gift, while just 40 percent of the men said they would.

Last year, Debra Jensen's Labrador named Nightmare and a German shepherd-Siberian Husky named Ticia got stockings with dog treats in them. This year, because her husband recently lost his job, there may not be a stocking, but there will still be treats — they can count on leftover ham.

"The dogs are our only children. I love my babies," said Jensen, 55, of Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Pat McCauley figures his 4-year-old Shih Tzu named Crystal can survive the holidays without a present. "I'm not going to buy the pet anything," said McCauley, 54, of Princeton, Ill., "I have a daughter who is 17 and she will buy the pets something but I surely wouldn't in any way, shape or form buy my pet a Christmas toy."

So, if you are planning to buy your best friend a gift, don't forget to check out our BestDoggieTips friends [here](#). And if you'd rather make something — check out our next story on great Christmas gifts for your dog that you can make yourself.

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Christmas Gifts for Dogs You Can Make Yourself

By Di Ellis (co-owner of www.BestDoggietips.com and also owner of www.Sewing4Dummies.com)

If your Christmas budget has been pared to the bone (no pun intended), then why not try making a special Christmas gift for your four legged friend?

Christmas this year will be a challenge for many families, with finances strained to breaking point. But there's no reason your dog cannot wake up to a special gift on Christmas morning with these great money saving ideas for doggie Christmas presents.

Christmas Dog Treats

Our first suggestion is something most everyone can do – bake some special Christmas Dog Treats. To make our dog treats you'll need 1 cup of wholemeal flour, ½ a cup of grated cheese, ½ a cup of cooked frozen vegetables such as peas, corn and carrots, ½ a cup of margarine or butter (melted) and a little bit of water.

To make, mix together the flour, cooked vegetables, cheese and melted butter (or margarine). If it is too stiff, add a little water until you have a dough like consistency.

Pop this in the fridge to chill for an hour or two, then remove from the fridge and place on a floured work surface. Roll out to about half an inch thick, then use seasonal cookie cutters to cut out Christmas shapes.

Place these on a greased baking tray and cook at 185°C / 375°F for 15 to 20 minutes, or until golden brown. Cool completely before placing in an airtight container.

Note: you can make more biscuits by doubling the ingredients, however these biscuits do not keep for as long as traditional dog biscuits (due to the cooked vegetables). Can be refrigerated.

Doggie Neck Scarves

These are also very simple to make. They are basically a triangle of fabric with a seam sewn all the way around. Scour your local fabric shops for their remnant bins. You can quite often buy smaller pieces of fabric (the ends of rolls) for a very reasonable price. A patterned fabric looks great, or you could get some plain fabric and write your dog's name on the scarf with a fabric pen (or draw a Santa – use your imagination!).

To make the scarf, just draw out a triangle on your fabric using tailors chalk. Here's how you do it. The bottom of the triangle is a straight line, so just mark on the edge of your fabric a length which is equal to your dog's neck measurement plus 12" or 30cm. When measuring your dog's neck, don't measure too tightly! So if your dog's neck is 10", make 2 marks on the bottom of your fabric 22" apart.

Now the point of your triangle should reach your dog's mid chest. So measure from under your dog's chin to the middle of his chest, then add 1½" (for seam allowance).

From the midpoint of your line on the bottom of your fabric, mark the point the right height for your dog. Then just draw the two lines from this point to either edge of your bottom line.

Cut out, pin and sew a hem all the way around, and you're done!

Bone Soft Toy

This one is a little trickier and requires some drawing skills! Again, search the remnant bins for some fabric to make your bone soft toy, but make sure that it's durable, because most dogs like to have a good chew, and it would be terrible to have your Christmas present destroyed before Christmas Day is over.

You'll also need some filling material. You can either use scraps of leftover fabric, or buy special filling material from your local fabric or craft shop.

Now just fold your fabric in two with right side together, and draw a bone shape (don't worry – the dog won't mind if it's not perfect)! Keep in mind when you are drawing the bone that you need to make it big enough to have a seam sewn all around. Cut out your bone shape and sew around almost the entire outside, but leave a gap of around 2" to allow you to fill the toy.

I also suggest you sew the seam twice (remember those teeth!). Now turn the bone right way around and stuff with your filling. Hand sew the final bit of seam closed.

Rope Toy

Here's another easy one. Just buy a length of rope (the thickness should be suitable for your dog – the bigger the dog, the thicker the rope). Now cut into three equal lengths. Tie a sturdy knot near one end, and then plait the 3 strands of rope and tie off with another sturdy knot at the other end.

Food Tray

If you have an elderly dog, they may be finding it more and more difficult to bend down to eat. If so, why not make them a wooden tray for their food bowl to sit on. You can use scrap pieces of wood – have a look around your garage or shed and see whether you have anything suitable.

You really just need a square or a rectangle, depending on the size of your dog's bowls. If you are going to put the water bowl there too, you may want to consider waterproofing the top of the tray.

And make sure the height of the tray is suitable for your dog.

So that's it – 5 relatively easy, and cheap, Christmas Gifts you can make for your dog. The whole pack can have a great Christmas now!

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The Amazing Story of Sabi

SHE survived almost 14 months in the unforgiving Afghan desert after being declared missing in action during a bloody battle with the Taliban.



Sabi, an Australian Army bomb detection dog, was reported MIA after she fled from the same battle in which SAS Trooper Mark Donaldson won his Victoria Cross for risking his life to save an Afghan interpreter in September last year.

Nine soldiers, including Sabi's handler were wounded in the ferocious fire-fight that ensued after the Australian, US and Afghan army convoy was ambushed by the enemy.

The black labrador fled from the chaos and was feared dead - until a US soldier found her roaming with an Afghan man in Oruzgan Province last week.

Speaking from Buckingham Palace after meeting the Queen, Trooper Donaldson said Sabi's miraculous survival story closed a chapter of their shared history.

"She's the last piece of the puzzle," Tpr Donaldson said.

"Having Sabi back gives some closure for the handler and the rest of us that served with her in 2008.

"It's a fantastic morale booster for the guys."

The Australian Special Operations Task Group had made repeated attempts to discover the dog's fate and put the call out to their Coalition buddies.

The US soldier who recovered Sabi at the patrol base in north-east Oruzgan said it was immediately obvious that the labrador was no ordinary mutt.

"I took the dog and gave it some commands it understood," John said.

After thanking the man, who may hold the secret behind Sabi's amazing survival, plans were put in place to fly the miracle mutt back to the Aussies.

One of Sabi's original trainers met her at Tarin Kowt and a simple game of catch instantly confirmed it was his dog.

"I nudged a tennis ball to her with my foot and she took it straight away," the trainer said.

"It's a game we used to play over and over during her training.

"It's amazing, just incredible, to have her back."

Australian School of Military Engineering Chief Trainer Sergeant Damian Dunne said the soldiers had never given up on Sabi.

"You can never say you have given up hope until you know what actually happened," Sgt Dunne said.

"She's a tough little bugger, absolutely as tough as nails.

"For a dog to be missing for so long to be found ... everyone is stoked."

Sgt Dunne said Sabi's original handler had been devastated at her loss.

"A lot of the guys did feel it, especially her handler. We class them as our best mates, it was devastating."

Sabi, like her fellow explosive ordinance detection dogs, was sourced from the pound.

"Normally we get medium-sized dogs with a longish snout, labradors, kelpies, collies, basically any working line.

"We've got a couple of bitzers and cross-breeds as well.

"We look at anything that will chase a tennis ball fanatically - they have to love a tennis ball, it is part of their training.

"They have to be fit, bold and not aggressive. They have to be social with other dogs, because they do interact with each other."

The dogs are trained to sniff out improvised explosive devices - and Sgt Dunne said there was no doubt that they saved lives.

The dogs undergo six months basic training before being appointed to a senior handler for another six months of intensive work.

They are then assigned to a soldier, who will be teamed with the dog either until it retires or the Digger moves on.

Sabi has spent more time in Afghanistan than many Australian soldiers.

She was first deployed to the country in 2007 and was nearing the end of her second deployment when she went missing last year.

The well-travelled mutt was also deployed to Melbourne to provide security at the 2006 Commonwealth Games.

Sabi appeared to be in good health when she was found, however she was flown to Kandahar to undergo a full vet check.

With rabies prevalent in the country, Sabi has undergone a range of disease tests.

She is currently in quarantine, awaiting her test results, before a decision can be made about her anticipated return to Australia

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Fun Stuff - Walking in a Doggie Wonderland

Sung to the tune of Winter Wonderland

Dog tags ring, are you listenin'?
In the lane, snow is glistenin'.
It's yellow, NOT white - I've been there tonight,
Marking up my winter wonderland.

Smell that tree? That's my fragrance.
It's a sign for wand'ring vagrants;
"Avoid where I pee, it's MY pro-per-ty!
Marked up as my winter wonderland."

In the meadow dad will build a snowman,
following the classical design.
Then I'll lift my leg and let it go Man,
So all the world will know it's mine-mine-mine!

Straight from me to the fencepost,
flows my natural incense boast;
"Stay off of my TURF, this small piece of earth,
I marked it as my winter wonderland."

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Do Dogs Think Like We Do?

Dogs can alert us to panic attacks and plummeting blood-sugar levels. They can sniff out cancer, remind owners to take their medication, learn language, snap people out of dissociative states and, in the case of seizures, position themselves to cushion a fall.

Because of their legendary intelligence, Border Collies set the standard in obedience competitions.

Despite these proven feats, much scepticism has been bandied about concerning the intelligence of the canine mind. But according to some recent research results, it turns out we may have underestimated our perspicacious pooches.

In a study conducted last year, Hungarian researchers reported that a guide dog for a blind and epileptic person became anxious before its master suffered a seizure. The dog was taught to bark and lick the owner's face and upper arm when it detected an onset, three to five minutes before the seizure. It's still not completely understood exactly how dogs detect seizures, but several smaller studies have shown that their super sniffers can also detect lung and other types of cancer by identifying odours emitted by the disease.

German researchers reported in 2004 that a border collie named Rico could grasp the name of an object in one try, had 200 objects in his repertoire and remembered them all a month later. Even the most ardent sceptics were impressed.

Dr. Stanley Coren, a psychology professor at the University of British Columbia and an author of several books on dogs suggests that dogs do more than simply mimick the body language of their owners (as suggested by the enduring example of the horse Clever Hans from the early 1900s). He believes that dog brains process information similarly to the way people do.

Dr. Coren has devised an intelligence ranking of 100 breeds, with border collies at No. 1. He says the most intelligent breeds (poodles, retrievers, Labradors and shepherds) can learn as many as 250 words, signs and signals, while the others can learn 165. This means the average dog is about as intellectually advanced as a two-year-old child with an ability to understand some abstract concepts.

But Clive D. L. Wynne, an associate professor of psychology at the University of Florida who specializes in canine cognition says we shouldn't kid ourselves into thinking that dogs view the world in the same way that we do. He told the New York Times that he disagrees with close comparisons between human and canine brains, arguing that it is mainly a dogs' sensitivity to the humans around them and their desire to please (and be rewarded with treats and tummy rubs) that's behind their oft impressive capabilities.

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The Weird & the Wonderful

Kangaroo tries to drown dog, attacks owner



A daily walk with his two dogs turned into a nightmare for Australian farmer Chris Rickard who was attacked by a kangaroo in a violent 30-minute rampage on his property.

Mr Rickard, 49, was left with injuries to his face, chest and abdomen after going to the rescue of his blue heeler cattle dog, Rocky. The dog was being drowned by a 5ft eastern grey kangaroo in a bizarre encounter on his 20-acre farm at Arthur's Creek in north eastern Victoria.

"Skippy has no longer got the same significance for me anymore," Mr Rickard said, nursing his wounds at his home while the kangaroo remained at large outside in the neighbouring paddocks.

Mr Rickard's injuries included a 20cm-long gash to his abdomen so deep it almost perforated his stomach lining after the kangaroo tried to disembowel him with its powerful hind legs.

The incident began when Rocky accidentally disturbed the kangaroo which was snoozing in long grass. The dog pursued the startled animal as it hopped away down the paddock towards a dam, followed by Mr Rickard's horses who also made a charge for it.

The marsupial then stopped in shallow water and began to fight back at the dog, using its forelimbs to push Rocky under the water for about 20 seconds.

Realising his pet was in grave danger, Mr Rickard jumped into the water and tried to make a grab for Rocky, only to also be attacked by the angry kangaroo.

"He slashed right across my face with his [forelimbs] and managed to tear open a large cut on my forehead ... there was so much blood I could only see out of one eye," Mr Rickard said. The kangaroo also tried to drown him while he was trying to protect the drowning dog and himself.

"The kangaroo had a couple of free shots at me where it raked my chest, my back, my face ... everything with its paws. It was trying to push me under water, but the water wasn't deep enough. Then it gave me a very big hit with its hind legs."

Mr Rickard managed to back himself and the dog out of the dam and retreat to his house where he called a neighbour to get help. He was treated in hospital for his wounds and released on Monday evening.

The farmer said he regularly sees kangaroos – sometimes in mobs of up to 30 – which cross the valleys on his property, but has never encountered one so aggressive.

“We usually don’t have a problem with them and they are normally welcome at my place, we just always make sure we keep a distance between the dogs and the kangaroo,” he said. “But I’ve never seen anything like this before.”

Mr Rickard said he will be wary but not too worried about kangaroos in future, but he is concerned about the impact the attack will have on his dog. “We are worried Rocky might be afraid of water now, and we hope he’s not going to be terrified of the sight of a kangaroo on the property,” he said.

When asked when he next plans to take the dogs out for a walk, Mr Rickard said he would wait a week or two. “I think my girlfriend will take them out tomorrow,” he said. “But if she does she’ll take a big stick with her for protection.”

The kangaroo is not usually violent towards humans. They are known to retreat to water, if it is around, when they feel threatened and attack using their hind legs which are so powerful they can disembowel animals.

Kangaroos are commonly found in the rural area of Arthur’s Creek, which is situated near the towns of Kinglake and Whittlesea. They were devastated by the "Black Saturday" bushfires in February.

Dog survives 65ft plunge into sea



A dog survived unscathed after plunging 65ft off cliffs into the sea during a walk with his new owners.

Andy and Joanna Finlay had just picked up the German Shepherd and stopped at Portlethen in Aberdeenshire on their way home to Kirriemuir in Angus.

But five-year-old Twinnie backed over the cliffs, and landed in the sea, narrowly missing rocks.

Coastguards and a police dog handler were called in and rescued him from the shoreline.

The couple had picked the dog up from Huntly, and gone for a walk at Portlethen on Sunday evening.

Mr Finlay, 39, said "We were getting back in the car and the dog took off. We were searching for around half an hour.

"Then we found him and were trying to get him, but he backed off and fell.

"Luckily he seemed to go straight into the water rather than hitting rocks."

He explained: "Coastguards and the police were called, they saw the glint of his eyes with a torch and found him lying half in and half out of the water.

"He was absolutely terrified but otherwise fine. He seems very happy now.

"The rescuers did a sterling job."

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