

Festive Woofs & Wags

Pet hostels have a special festive itinerary planned for their furry members

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THE party caps are out, the chew sticks have been tossed around, the ice-cream scoops are almost melting. But the guests are busy splashing about in the pool. Whistle or shout out their names and they come bounding out, shaking off the water and woofing for the Diwali celebrations to begin. It's a full house at Pet Sitters, Hinjewadi, and Doggy's Den Pet Resort, Nagar Road. With owners away for the Diwali holidays, pets are having quite a vacation at these hostels.

"We have 32 kennels and during Diwali the occupancy is 100 per cent," says Shalaka Mundada, owner, Pet Sitters. There are two reasons for this Diwali rush - one, the pet parents are away and two, some can't handle their pets who are afraid of crackers. "We are beyond city limits so crackers are never a problem here," Mundada adds.

Labradors, German Shepherds, Jack Russell Terriers and mixed breeds are currently occupying the kennels at Pet Sitters. When they're not busy celebrating and having doggie fun (read: playing fetch and chasing each other), they lounge about in the separate terrace area attached to each kennel. "It's slightly nippy here and they like soaking in some sun," adds Mundada. There are six handlers who look after the dogs during the different activities.

The pets are given 24-36 hours to settle in after which the fun begins. "We walk them four times so that they get a feel of the place. Most adult dogs are trained not to poop or pee in the place they stay in so we take them around the whole property which is four acres. We also have a hilly slope where they love running about," says Mundada.



DOGGIES DAY OUT: (from top) Pets at Doggy's Den; Smruti Raghani; Shalaka Mundada

Diwali is incomplete without socialising. The friendlier dogs are free to play with each other and exchange some festive cheer. Then there's the in-house pool for them to take a dip in. Mundada's father Satish Hulyalkar also looks into the daily activities. "On the last day of Diwali, we will

give them an ice-cream treat," say the father-daughter duo.

At Doggy's Den Pet Resort, the 12 dogs - Labradors, Cocker Spaniels, German Shepherds, Rottweilers and Pugs - will be treated to doggie cakes and chew sticks. "They're on vacation here and we are keeping them on their paws. In the morning, they have a training session followed by an hour-long swim where they play with toys in the pool," says Harish Raghani, co-owner and certified canine behaviorist. His wife Smruti and partner Vinod Kale join him in managing the resort.

Afternoons are for naps but 5 pm onwards, there are agility programmes planned for the furry members. "They can even do some sightseeing around the resort. We serve them a delicious home-cooked meal of chicken, rice and mixed vegetables at 7 pm after which they retire to their little rooms," adds Raghani. This one-year-old resort has recently been renovated and the dogs are making the most of the fancy festive decor.