

# HOLIDAY



Celebrating is tiring! A dog rests during Kukar Tihar, a special day during the Hindu festival of Diwali just for dogs.

by Colette Weil Parrinello

**I**t's about time there's a holiday for dogs. In Nepal, dogs have a special day where they are honored, celebrated, and worshipped. Dogs are pampered and spoiled on the second day of the Hindu five-day festival, called Diwali "festival of lights" or Tihar in Nepal. This festival will be celebrated from October 28 – November 1 in 2016. Dogs' special day is called Kukar Tihar, "worship of the dogs" recognizing the many joys they bring to people.

Hindus believe in the sacred relationship between dogs and people, as dogs were one of the first domesticated animals. Dogs play an important role in Hindu beliefs. Sarama, the mother of dogs, helps the ruler of heaven by guarding the gates to the *afterlife*.

All dogs are draped with malla, garlands of marigolds, and *tika*, special marks on dog's forehead with colorful dyes. Tika is a paste made of yogurt and rice and a natural red powder

# JUST FOR DOGS!



Dogs are draped with garlands and a mark on their heads symbolizes devotion.

called *abir*. The tika mark is placed on the dog with a single stroke and symbolizes devotion. It makes each dog sacred and empowers the dog to bless all those they meet on this day. All dogs including street dogs are treated to feasts of wonderful food, decorations of lights, *diyas* (traditional earthen lamps), and *rangolis* (traditional floor art).

Family and friends come together to celebrate, decorate their homes, feast, share gifts, and tell stories. Police dogs are given special recognition

with honor ceremonies and they participate in competitions.

A different animal is celebrated on each day of the festival – crows and ravens, dogs, cows, oxen. But it's dogs' special day of respect that captures everyone's heart and gives joy as they honor their loyal best friend and protector.

