

Keep Your Pets Healthy This Holiday Season

The Christmas season is a time of reflection, family, peace, and celebration. Planning for the holidays often means preparation of the household for friends, family, and other guests. Unfortunately, most preparations do not include safety. In particular - pets. Pets are curious animals and that mischievous wonder can get them, and you, into serious trouble. Some of the concerns listed in this article may seem far fetched to readers, but not to the veterinarians who treat these animals season after season.

Tinsel, String and Decorative Wrapping Holiday decorations of tinsel, ribbons, yarn and string are the norm in most households. They are traditions pleasing to the eye. And not just human. Cats love string and tinsel. It may be cute and seem innocent but it is deadly. When ingested, these items can become lodged in the intestinal tract. Often times safe removal requires life threatening and costly surgery.

Holiday roasts and turkeys are tied with twine to hold everything in place. If not properly disposed of these tasty morsels attract cats and dogs alike. Before you know it you may be taking a trip to the emergency clinic.

Christmas Trees Christmas just wouldn't be Christmas without a fresh tree! To help your pet avoid injuries, ensure your tree is firmly mounted. The base should fit firmly in the tree stand and the top should be anchored to the ceiling. Cats love to climb trees. Dogs love to scratch themselves on the trunk and the needles. Many trees have toppled over during these activities causing not just a ruined setting but broken bones, punctured or lacerated skin, and sprains. If using a real tree, ensure it has plenty of fresh water. Avoid using chemicals because animals may drink the water and become poisoned. Most sprays to simulate snow are very dangerous to pets. Also, glass ornaments can be dangerous if knocked from the tree and broken. Fine glass can be ingested or become imbedded into the pads or the skin between the toes. Try to avoid these types of ornaments if possible or at least move them away from the ends of branches or lower reaches.

Table Scraps Table scraps and other foods high in fat content may cause pancreatitis (inflammation of the pancreas), a potentially life threatening situation in companion animals. Avoid raw meats and bones. Many diseases shared by people and pets are passed through this bad habit. Sharp bone fragments are a common source of punctured intestinal tracts and blockages.

Chocolates A favorite among holiday revelers is chocolates. Chocolates contain stimulants including caffeine and theobromine. Baker's chocolate (unsweetened) is especially dangerous. One ounce of this can kill a small dog. Symptoms of chocolate toxicity include diarrhea, hyperactivity, vomiting, and heart palpitations. Therefore, do not leave chocolates unsupervised or within reach of pets. Chocolates in large quantities can also contain high levels of fat (see table scraps section).

Ornamental Plants Many holiday plants such as holly, poinsettias, and mistletoe may be toxic to pets if ingested. Holly is most commonly associated with digestive upset and nervous system depression. The ingestion of Poinsettia leaves results in mild to moderate digestive upsets. American Mistletoe produces quite severe digestive tract irritation, as well as low temperature, low heart rate, and sometimes seizures. All symptoms may lead to coma and even death.

Training Aid Use Many companion pet owners find it impossible to separate their pets from the family and festivities. After all, the pets are part of the family. Precaution is the name of the game in safety. Try to anchor your trees and arrange your house the same as you would if a toddler were around. The use of training aids and spray products are acceptable to use to provide a safe, natural means of marking areas to keep pets away from. Many products are available on the market for this purpose. Most work. Take caution to pick a product that is natural and safe. You don't want to introduce any nasty chemicals into your house or create one health problem while trying to avoid another. Use common sense and preparation to have a wonderful holiday season.

About the Author

James E. Harris is a professional copywriter specializing in writing for the pet industry. He advocates the use of [Keep Away](#), a non-staining, pleasant smelling, all natural product approved by veterinarians that emits a harmless odor that discourages animals from climbing and chewing on fabrics, rugs, wood, leather, clothing, shoes, furniture or any surface. Especially effective on artificial and natural Christmas Trees. James has 15 years business experience and is exposed to many products for the pet industry. It is rare that he recommends a product directly.

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