



Tips to Keep Your Pet Safe this Holiday Season

The Holiday season is just around the corner. This time of year can be stressful for both people and their pets. Petworks would like to remind pet parents to consider the safety of their 'fur kids' when

decking the halls. Holiday decorations, seasonal plants and festive treats can sometimes spell disaster for cats and dogs, and an emergency trip to the vet can quickly put a damper on any holiday celebration. To keep your pets safe and healthy during the holidays, we recommend keeping the following tips in mind:

- **Tree:** A six pound cat can topple a seven foot tree faster than you can say "TIMBER!" Be sure to use a heavy duty base so that the tree is not top-heavy. Choosing a tree that is wide at the bottom, rather than one that is tall and narrow, can also help keep Holiday conifers from tipping. A hook installed on the wall behind the tree can secure fishing line attached to it for extra invisible reinforcement. Use 3M Command Self-Adhesive Mini hooks that do not leave marks when removed after the Holidays. Allow pets to get used to the tree prior to decorating it; leave the bare tree up for a day and watch how they react to it. If they chew the needles, coat the branches in a bitter-flavoured spray. Keep pets away from the water reservoir in the live tree stand because the oils excreted can be harmful. Stagnant tree water is a breeding ground for bacteria and your curious critter could end up with nausea or diarrhea. Cover the pooled water with netting so it can still be watered easily without attracting unwanted attention from furry friends.
- **Decorations:** Even if your pet does not show interest in decorations, do not take chances and avoid hazardous temptation. Dangling wires can deliver a potentially lethal electrical shock or burns to the mouth and esophagus. To discourage chewing, coat strands of lights with a bitter spray and place them near the trunk, rather than resting on the edges of branches. It is also a good idea to avoid twinkling lights, as they will just attract the pets' attention. To keep the cord that goes from strings of lights to the electrical outlet safe, slide it through an empty paper towel tube to conceal the plug. Tinsel is dangerous-it can be deadly for cats! Do not decorate with it at all. Be sure to use non-toxic, unbreakable ornaments. Shards of breakable ornaments can damage your pet's mouth. If fragile ornaments must be used, be sure they



are located towards the top of the tree, out of reach. Artificial snow is toxic to cats, so is best avoided.

- **Seasonal Plants:** Poinsettia's, holly, mistletoe and other seasonal plants can be toxic or cause gastrointestinal problems if ingested by pets. Many varieties of lilies, if eaten, cause kidney failure in cats. Instead, select artificial plants made from silk or plastic, or choose a pet-safe bouquet.

- **Candles, Tablecloths and other Potential Hazards:** Be sure to keep lit candles away from pets. They can knock the candles over and burn themselves, or potentially start a fire. Never leave candles unattended. Table cloths and runners can attract attention if they are hanging low over the table; discourage potential table-clearing tug-of-war by ensuring they are out of view. Potpourri oils can be toxic if ingested so exercise caution. Ribbon can be fun to play with and/or eat so keep gifts away from playful pets.



- **Food:** Holiday turkey bones can present potential for choking so ensure they are safely disposed of. Chocolate, alcohol, grapes and raisins can be deadly to cats and dogs, so be sure to store them safely. Fatty greasy foods can cause stomach upset and pancreatitis if ingested, so keep your curious canine away from the holiday gravy! Xylitol, an artificial sweetener, should also be avoided because it is toxic. Resist the urge to store perishable gifts, such as fudge, under the tree because pets will be



tempted to "re-gift" these items (to themselves)!

- **House Guests:** The Holidays can mean stress and confusion for pets; there is an increased number of strangers coming and going from the house, and during this busy time, pets might not get the same amount of love and attention they are used to. Favourite spots, such as the guest room, can be suddenly inhabited by visitors so it is important to make certain pets have a safe space to call their own. House guests can mistakenly let pets outside, or just frighten them with their presence causing pets to dart out the door, so it is important to provide a safe pet sanctuary. Be sure that guests' keep their medications zipped up and packed away from inquisitive noses.
- **Noise:** As you count down to the New Year, keep in mind that noisy poppers can terrify pets and cause possible damage to sensitive ears. Fireworks can scare

pets, causing them to run away, so secure cats and dogs safely indoors. Products such as D.A.P™ and Thundershirt™ can help alleviate noise anxiety.

- **Pets as Gifts:** Owning a companion animal is quite likely to be a 15-20 year responsibility. Never buy a pet as a surprise gift for somebody. Also, because the holidays are usually a chaotic time, it is best to arrange the delivery of the pet after Christmas to avoid undue stress on the animal. If you are considering gifting a puppy or kitten, really think it through before you do so; pet ownership is a big responsibility that should not be entered into lightly! Thousands of unwanted animals are dropped off at shelters after the Holidays. Do not add to the problem by buying a pet for somebody on a whim.

The holidays can be fun for your furry companion but they can be stressful too. Provide a quiet place for them with all necessities for times when the household is too chaotic. Plan to take a few minutes every so often to cuddle and play with them, and you both will be happier and more relaxed this holiday season.

Following the tips above can help keep your pet safe during this hectic time. Pet-proof your home, choose pet-friendly decorations, and educate yourself and your family about potential Holiday hazards for your pets. If you think your pet might have consumed something potentially toxic, phone your veterinarian, local animal emergency hospital or visit the links below right away.



Additional Resources:

ASPCA's Poison Control (\$65 consult fee may apply):
www.asPCA.org/pet-care/poison-control/

Pet Poison Help Line (\$35 consult fee may be applied to credit card):
www.petpoisonhelpline.com

IWK Regional Poison Centre:
1-800-565-8161

