

HOLIDAY HAZARDS FOR YOUR PETS



The holidays are a time for giving, but that should not include sweets or turkey scraps to your pet. According to the American Animal Hospital Association, holiday festivities present situations that can be hazardous to your pet's health. A little precaution will make it a happy time for everyone. Some of the more common holiday hazards include:

- **BONES**: The holiday turkey or ham will leave a lot of tantalizing bones, but do not feed them to your pet. Smaller bones or bone chips can lodge in the throat, stomach, and intestinal tract. Fats, gravies, and poultry skin can cause severe gastrointestinal problems as well.
- **HOLIDAY PLANTS**: Holly and mistletoe are extremely poisonous when eaten. Keep them out of pets reach.
- **PINE NEEDLES**: Check around holiday trees and decorative boughs frequently. Ingested pine needles can puncture your pets' intestines.
- **SWEETS**: Too much holiday candy is as bad for you as it is for your pet. A stomachache is a mild side effect while an over- indulgence in chocolate can actually be fatal. Chocolate poisoning is caused by theobromine, a caffeine- like chemical substance found naturally in chocolate. Keep those one-pound chocolate kisses well away from curious pet's-don't leave them wrapped under the tree! Clinical signs of chocolate poisoning include: hyperecitability, nervousness, vomiting, and diarrhea.
- **CHRISTMAS TREES**: Make sure your Christmas tree is well-secured. If you have a tree-climbing cat or a large dog, anchor the top of the tree to a wall, using strong cord or rope. Preservatives used in the water at the base can also cause intestinal problems, so be sure it is inaccessible.
- **ORNAMENTS**: Sharp or breakable tree ornaments should be kept out of your pets reach. Hang these items high on the tree.



- **ELECTRIC LIGHT CORDS:** These are tempting to cats who like to play with strings as well as to puppies that are teething and interested in chewing. If a pet bites through an electrical cord, it could result in a severe burn to the tongue which causes the pet's lung to fill with fluid, causing respiratory distress. This is also an emergency requiring immediate veterinary attention.
- **POINSETTIA:** Consuming this festive-looking plant can be irritating to the mouth and stomach of the dog or cat that chews on or eats it. Contrary to popular belief, poinsettia is not specifically toxic.
- **RIBBON & TINSEL:** These are of special interest to playful cats and kittens that see these materials as toys (or prey) to be chased, pounced upon, chewed, or swallowed. While chasing and pouncing pose no health threats, chewing and swallowing do. As these strings or linear foreign bodies can catch in the GI tract, leading to bunching of intestines as the body tries in vain to move the string or ribbon through. This is a life-threatening condition requiring surgery for correction. Supervise animals that play with string closely.