

Keep Your Pets Safe During the Holidays

Pets are a part of the family and when they become ill or injured it is upsetting and traumatic for pet owners. To keep your pets safe during the holiday season and to avoid a trip to the veterinarian or worse, follow these simple tips:

- Many holiday plants can lead to health problems in pets. Among the plants to keep out of reach are holly, mistletoe, poinsettias and lilies.
- Snow globes often contain antifreeze, which is poisonous to pets.
- Pine needles, when ingested, can puncture holes in a pet's intestine; keep pet areas clear of pine needles.
- Extra cords and plugs of holiday lights and other fixtures can look like chew toys to pets. Tape down or cover cords to help avoid shocks, burns or other serious injuries.
- Anchor Christmas trees with a string to the ceiling or wall to keep it from falling on pets.
- **DO NOT** let pets drink the holiday tree water. Some may contain fertilizers and stagnant tree water can harbor bacteria. Use nontoxic tree water preservatives and artificial snow or use screens around trees to block access to electrical cords and gifts.
 - **DO NOT** put aspirin in the water thinking it will keep the tree or plant more vigorous. If a pet ingests the aspirin-laced water, his health or even life can be at risk.
- Pets can be tempted to eat tinsel, which can block the intestines; hang high and securely out of reach.
- Keep ornaments out of reach of pets. Ingestion of any ornament can result in life-threatening emergencies, even ornaments made from dried food. Remember to pick up shards from broken glass ornaments; they can injure paws, mouths and other parts of the body.
- Put away toys after children open gifts. Small plastic pieces, rubber balls and cloth toys are common causes of choking and intestinal blockage in pets which often must be removed surgically.



- **AVOID** toxic decorations such as bubbling lights, snow sprays and snow flock. If ingested or inhaled, they can cause serious reactions. Styrofoam and tinsel pose choking hazard and intestinal obstruction. Water in snow scenes may contain toxic organisms such as Salmonella.
- Keep candles on high shelves.
- Holiday guests and activities can be stressful and frightening to pets and can trigger illness and intestinal upset. Make sure pets have a safe place to retreat in your house and are wearing current I.D. in case they escape out a door when guests come and go.
- Keep feeding and exercise on a regular schedule to reduce stress.
- **DO NOT** feed your pets human food; be sure to keep them away from the table, unattended plates and secure the lids on garbage cans. Many holiday foods can cause illnesses from vomiting and diarrhea to highly serious pancreatitis and other toxic reactions. In addition, candy wrappers, aluminum foil pieces and ribbons can choke pets.

For more information on holiday safety tips for your pets visit the ASPCA web site at <http://www.asPCA.org/pet-care/holiday-safety-tips>.

For more information on holiday items that are poisonous to your pets visit the Pet Poison Helpline web site at <http://www.petpoisonhelpline.com/>.

If you think your pet ate something poisonous, contact the **Animal Poison Control Center (855) 764-7661** or the **Pet Poison Helpline (800) 213-6680**; both are available **24 hours a day, 7 days a week**.

