



# Holiday Safety Guide for Pets

Ah, the holidays. The most wonderful time of the year, right? Unfortunately, it's too easy to end up losing track of the potential safety hazards that all those decorations and all that food can present. During the cooler months, we think of family, shopping, meals, and holiday cheer, but it's easy to lose track of what our pets are nibbling on when we get caught up in the stress and planning. Here is a quick safety reference for keeping your four-legged family members happy and healthy!

When it comes to holiday food, be careful of what you or other family members or friends leave available. As tempting as it is, don't share your leftovers with your dog. Gastrointestinal problems are common as a result and in particular with rich, fatty foods. Don't even share cooked bones with your dog, and be especially sure to never give them poultry bones. These can cause serious medical problems as they work their way through the digestive tract by possibly splintering and thus puncturing intestines, for example. Other common holiday foods that can be bad for your pet include onions, high quantities of garlic, chocolate, grapes and raisins. Also be aware of what tasty and wonderful smelling treats are in your stockings. Even dogs love to see if there is a chocolate snack in there!

Holiday décor can present a number of opportunities for accidents to happen. The key is to be very aware of where you place your decorations and plan around potential hazards. This is no reason to lessen how you beautify your home. It's all in the planning!

Holiday houseplants are a commonly overlooked issue, but when placing plants in your home consider that some are toxic if ingested including, but not limited to, poinsettias, holly, and mistletoe. Be careful to tuck electrical cords out of the way, place treasured ornaments higher on your tree, avoid using metal ornament hooks in case of ingestion or chewing, and while tinsel isn't necessarily toxic, it can easily cause a major intestinal blockage. Gift bows and ribbons are also very tempting for dogs and cats to chew on!

If you plan to host a gathering, be sure that your guests are careful to not let your pet out unattended, and if your pet gets overwhelmed by the activity, it's a great idea to have a quiet place in the house where they can relax.

The holiday season is a time of festivities and fun, and with just a little additional planning and consideration, you can easily avoid an unplanned trip to your veterinarian. Our animal family members add joy to the season, too! Be safety-conscious and have fun!

*Article by Abbie Cooke*