

HOLIDAY HAZARDS

While you are busy making plans for Christmas, please don't forget to include your pets. The holidays are a time for giving, but there are some things you should not share with your best friends. Once you know the hazards, a little precaution and prevention will make the holidays a happy time for everyone.

Some of the more common holiday hazards include:

Bones: The holiday turkey will leave a lot of tantalizing bones, but don't feed them to your pet. Beware of steak bones, too. Small bones or bone fragments can lodge in the throat, stomach, and intestinal tract.

Fat: Those wonderful gravies, and poultry skin can cause severe gastrointestinal upset.

Holiday Plants: Holly and mistletoe are extremely poisonous when eaten. The lovely poinsettia may not be truly poisonous, but its milky white sap and leaves can cause severe gastric distress. The best approach is to keep plants out of your pet's reach.

Electrical Cords: Holiday lights mean more electrical cords for kittens and puppies to chew. Be sure you have cords secured and out of the way.

Candles: Lighted candles should never be left unattended especially if left at kitty's eye level or within puppy's chewing zone. An exuberant tail, a swat of a paw, and candles and hot wax can quickly become disastrous. Anchor candles securely and away from curious faces and feet.

Pine Needles: Check around holiday trees and boughs frequently. Ingested pine needles can cause intestinal damage.

Holiday Tree: make sure your tree is well secured. If you have a tree-climbing cat or large dog with a happy tail, anchor the tree to the wall, using strong cord or rope. Preservatives often used in the water in a tree stand can cause gastric upsets.

Ornaments: Sharp or breakable ornaments, and aluminum foil should be kept out of reach. String objects, especially tinsel and ribbons are thin and sharp and can cause intestinal injury.

Stress and Company: With guests coming and going, watch out for open doors and sneaky pets. Make sure your pets have collars and tags on in case of escape. Ask guests to keep an eye out for pets under foot and remind them that sometimes your normally friendly dog or cat may be less than willing to deal with enthusiastic children and rooms full of unfamiliar people. Provide a special quiet place with a blanket and plenty of fresh water for your pets if the festivities get too stressful for them.