

Christmas Cautions

It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas! And Hanukkah! This holiday season, your home is sure to be filled with fun and holiday cheer. It's important to consider your pets' safety when decorating and preparing holiday meals. Here is a list of Christmas cautions for dogs and cats to keep in mind.

Decorations

Many pets find holiday decorations very appealing. However, this can lead to various types of injuries.

- **Ornaments:** Pets may think these are toys and ingest (eat) them and/or choke on them. Glass ornaments can cause cuts on paws as well as to the mouth and digestive tract, if swallowed. They can also get stuck in the GI tract and need surgical removal.
- **Tinsel/Ribbon/Garland/Wrapping Paper:** Pets often find tinsel and ribbon quite intriguing. This is especially true for cats. If ingested, any of these items can get trapped in the intestines. This requires immediate veterinary attention and can be life threatening if not addressed.
- **Potpourri:** The festive scent can entice pets to investigate. Make sure containers are covered or not accessible. If ingested, potpourri can cause GI upset (vomiting and diarrhea).
- **Christmas Tree Water:** Many pets love to drink the water in the tree stand. Be cautious if you use chemicals in the water to preserve the life of your tree as these can be harmful to your pets.

Lights/Candles/Electrical Cords

The glow of lights and candles add a warm touch to dark, wintry nights. Our furry friends, however, may see things differently.

- **Candles or Fireplaces:** Any type of flame candle or fire can cause a burn risk to our furry friends.
- **Wires/Electrical Cords:** Pets may think lights or cords are toys. They may chew them and experience an electrical shock, or create a fire risk.

Presents

Some holiday gifts may contain parts that can be hazardous if swallowed. Be aware of small toys, batteries, and buttons.

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Holiday Plants

Holiday plants may be confused for food by our pets. Side effects include irritation, vomiting, and diarrhea as well as more life-threatening conditions. Be especially cautious of the following if you choose to display them in your home:

- Lilies (all varieties, including Easter Lily, Amaryllis): these can cause acute renal (kidney) failure in our feline friends. It is very important if your cat eats any type of Lily plant that you seek immediate veterinary care
- Mistletoe
- Poinsettias
- Holly
- Pine tree needles and sap
- Christmas Cactus

Food

There are two groups of food to avoid feeding your pet. One is high-fat foods which can lead to pancreatitis (inflammation of the pancreas) and can affect both dogs and cats. The other group is toxic foods which require an immediate visit to the veterinarian.

High Fat Foods

- Turkey (dark meat)
- Buttery/Fried Dishes
- Stuffing (if cooked with butter or whole milk)
- Gravy
- Casseroles (depending on the fat content)
- Certain Desserts

Toxic Foods

- Uncooked bread dough
- Onions
- Raisins, grapes
- Xylitol (a sugar substitute found in gum and candies)
- Certain spices/oils (sage)
- Chocolate (dark chocolate is more toxic than milk chocolate)
- Avocado (seed only)

Should your pet experience an emergency this holiday season, contact your primary care veterinarian or Red Bank Veterinary Hospital's Mount Laurel emergency location at (856) 429-4394.

Red Bank Veterinary Hospital wishes you and your family a happy and healthy holiday season.