

# Hidden Holiday Dangers in Your Home

## Seasonal Safety Tips to Safeguard Your Pets

The holiday season is here, and it is always a good idea to take a few simple, yet important precautions to protect our family members.

### Seasonal Safety

Holiday paraphernalia can be extremely dangerous to cats and dogs. Some animals, especially puppies and kittens who are teething, love to chew, but electrical cords and tree lights can lead to serious burns and fatal shocks. It is best to cover or tack cords down to prevent this. A good rule of thumb is that if any part or all of your holiday decorations will fit in a pet's mouth, then it is potentially dangerous. Be sure to keep in mind tinsel, ornaments, rubber bands, balloons, strings, and ribbons out of your pet's reach. Read warnings on items like spray-on snow. Never put ribbons around an animal's neck or allow pets to play with plastic or foil wrappings. Inquisitive young animals like kittens can suffocate in plastic, and in older animals, it can get caught in their intestinal tracts.

### Look Before You Cook

Be careful in your kitchen, too. Cookies, turkey trimmings, desserts, and other rich holiday foods can upset the gastrointestinal tracts of your pets and lead to vomiting, diarrhea, or even pancreatitis. Never give bones from turkey, chicken,

pork, or fish to pets because these bones can splinter and cause serious injury. Chocolate is a food that contains theobromine, a powerful stimulant that can be toxic to pets. Dark chocolate and baking chocolate are especially dangerous. Alcoholic beverages can be toxic too, so watch out for pets trying to sneak a sip of your egg nog, beer, or other beverages.

### Beautiful, but Deadly

Many plants are toxic to pets, including Christmas rose, holly, mistletoe, philodendron, dieffenbachia, lilies, elephant ear, eucalyptus, spider plants, azalea, ivy, amaryllis, pyracantha, oleander, boxwood, Jerusalem cherry, and plant bulbs. Be sure to keep these poisonous plants out of your pet's reach.

### Hot Topics

Watch out for hot irons, coffee pots, stove burners, potpourri, candles, and space heaters. Sometimes the pleasant aromas overcome common sense, and your pets may try to get too close and get burned. Other times they just want to feel warm, so if you have a fireplace, be sure to use a screen when you light a fire.

### Outdoor Safety

Remember to knock on the hood of your car or honk the horn on chilly mornings to wake up a sleeping cat, who may be napping on your engine to keep warm. It's also important to keep in mind that if you put antifreeze in your engine, it is critical to clean up any spills immediately. Antifreeze smells and tastes good to pets, but even a small amount can kill them. Tightly close containers and keep them where your pets cannot access them. As long as you use common sense and remember that pets-much like young children-are very curious, you will know what critical steps you should take to ensure that your family and your pets will spend a joyous-and-safe-holiday together.

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