

PRESS RELEASE

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Fall Safety Concerns for Animals - Large and Small

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With dazzling colors on the trees and harvest festivals abounding, many people love the autumn season. But, with the holidays and cooling temperatures, the fall brings some potential dangers to our animals-large and small.

As we winterize cars, houses and barns, remember that antifreeze is highly toxic to pets. Just one or two licks of antifreeze can cause kidney failure and death. Look for the newer, safer version of antifreeze which does not contain the sweetener so tempting to pets. Another toxin, rodenticide (rat poison), is formulated to be tasty to rodents, but is also appealing to dogs, cats, and wildlife. These poisons prohibit blood clotting, leading to fatal blood loss and death. If you must use these products, put them up high or in a place where dogs and cats and larger wildlife cannot reach them. Every year veterinarians see cases where owners have forgotten that they put out the poison or where they put it. Don't assume that "out of sight" means the dog or cat won't find it-- they have an excellent sense smell and, given the chance, will make a beeline to it once they detect it.

Fall decorations including stringy fake spider webs (cats like to eat them), candles (burns), and potpourri (toxic to cats) can present serious dangers to pets. Most people are aware that chocolate is toxic to cats and dogs, but many don't realize that xylitol is also toxic. Xylitol, used to artificially sweeten gums and other candies, causes a potentially fatal drop in blood sugar. The easiest way to help prevent accidental exposure to these dangers is to keep all people food out of reach of pets. Also, keep a close eye on pets around household decorations to minimize the temptation to chew or eat them.

Mother Nature also produces health risks for pets: mushrooms and other fungi. With the cooler, damper weather, mushrooms sprout, and many can be toxic to pets, causing liver and kidney damage, and seizures. Dogs seem irresistibly drawn to the compost pile, where they often gorge on decaying food of all sorts. Rotting debris often leads to vomiting and diarrhea, requiring a trip to the veterinarian. Compost piles contain an additional, more serious hazard: mycotoxins. These toxins, produced by the fungi growing in the compost as it decays, cause seizures. It is often necessary to keep the poisoned pet in the

hospital for a day or two to treat the seizures with intravenous medications.

With the fall comes hunting season. Although hunters try to be safe, accidents occasionally happen. Animals and humans should take precautions to avoid being mistaken for game. Hikers and horseback riders should wear bright colors to make themselves more visible. Dogs should wear bright orange collars or vests. Keep horses and small ruminants close to home, and post "Hunter Safety Zone" signs to make hunters aware that there are domestic animals in the area.

These common sense precautions during the fall season can help keep you and your animals safe. For more information, contact your veterinarian, or go to www.vtvets.org.

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The Vermont Veterinary Medical Association (VVMA), founded in 1898, is a professional organization of more than 330 veterinarians dedicated to compassionate animal care and quality medicine. For more information, visit www.vtvets.org or call (802) 878-6888.