



**PRESS RELEASE**  
**December 20, 2017**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

Kathy Finnie, Executive Director  
Vermont Veterinary Medical Association  
802-878-6888  
[Kathy@vtvets.org](mailto:Kathy@vtvets.org)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Holiday Pet Safety**

By Erin Forbes, DVM --information from AVMA  
Vermont Veterinary Medical Association

With the holidays fast upon us, it can be easy to get caught up in the festivities but is important to remember that there are variety of dangers facing our pets. From food to parties to decorations, there are many holiday hazards for pets. There are some things you can do to ensure that this season is happy and healthy for your pet.

One of the easiest ways to keep your pet safe is to plan ahead. Make sure you know your primary clinic's holiday hours, the nearest 24/7 hospital, and keep the APSCA poison control number handy. This way, if there is an emergency, you will know who to call and where to go.

Holiday food poses many risks for pets, especially since children, and sometimes adults, like to share the food with their furry companions. It is generally best to consider all foods toxic, but some foods are especially hazardous. Chocolate is an essential part of the holidays for many people, but it is toxic to dogs and cats and can cause seizures, high blood pressure, and even death. It is important to be cautious with all sweet food, as some may contain xylitol, a deadly sugar substitute. Foods with a high fat content, such as turkey skin and gravy, can cause pancreatitis which can be very serious and sometimes deadly. If you are ever worried your pet ate something they shouldn't have, call your veterinarian or the emergency veterinarian right away.

Decorations, while beautiful, can also be a source of risky temptations to our pets. Christmas trees can be especially dangerous but there are a few simple things you can do to make them safer. Cats love to climb, and the Christmas tree is a perfect climbing object. However, trees can easily tip over if climbed. If possible, try to tie your tree to a ceiling or door frame. Ornaments can cause obstructions if eaten or lacerations if they break and your pet plays with the pieces, so try and put ornaments higher up on the tree where your pets can't knock them off. Tinsel is very tempting to cats, since it is shiny and moves in the breeze like prey, but if eaten, can cause a severe intestinal obstruction and require surgical removal. If your cat seems interested in the tinsel, it might be best to not put it on the tree. Many holiday plants are toxic to pets so always keep them where they cannot be reached; if your pet eats a plant and you are concerned contact the ASPCA poison hotline right away. Always make sure you never leave your pet alone with a lit candle, as many animals will be attracted to the flame and may try to play with it or knock it over, having serious consequences.

(continued)

If you are having a party there are certain precautions you can take to keep your pet safe. Visitors can be upsetting to pets, so don't force your animal to interact with guests. It is a great idea to have a room that visitors aren't allowed in and can be made into a safe haven. Put a litter box, toys, food, and a bed in the room, play calming music, and spray Feliway or Adaptil. Make sure that your guests are careful when they come in or leave as some animals may try to escape out an open door. Finally, ensure your pet's microchip is up to date if they somehow do get out, they can easily be reunited with their families when they are found.

These are just a few tips to help keep your holiday season a cheerful one. If you have any questions or concerns about your specific pet, please contact your veterinarian for advice.

###

*The Vermont Veterinary Medical Association (VVMA), founded in 1898, is a professional organization of 375 veterinarians dedicated to compassionate animal care and quality medicine.*