



PRESS RELEASE
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FOR MORE INFORMATION

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Holiday Dangers for Pets

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With the holiday season rapidly approaching, many pet owners are unsure which plants, foods, and decorations are and are not for their pets.

Most species of lilies are deadly to cats. In some cases, a small amount of pollen or even one leaf can cause sudden kidney failure. Christmas cactus and Christmas (English) holly can cause significant damage to the stomach and intestinal tract of dogs and cats. Death is not usually reported, but it's best to keep these plants out of reach. If your pet ingests some of these plants, call your veterinarian immediately.

A holiday myth is that Poinsettias and mistletoe are toxic to pets. These plants are not as toxic as urban legend describes. Poinsettias have little crystals in them that can be irritating to the pets mouth or skin, but serious poisonings are almost unheard of. American mistletoe (the kind we use for Christmas parties), is not very toxic, generally causing mild stomach upset. Its cousin, European mistletoe is more toxic and causes more problems.

The most dangerous foods at this time of year are chocolates and cocoa, sugarless gum/candies containing Xylitol, fatty meat scraps, and yeast bread dough. If your pet ingests any of these, even if it seems to be just a small amount, call your veterinarian immediately. The often derided gift- fruit cake- is actually quite dangerous to our pets. Grapes, raisins, and currants are common ingredients and have been implicated in kidney failure in dogs. In addition, many fruit cakes have been soaked in rum or other alcohols making it doubly dangerous to pets. Alcohol is rapidly absorbed into the pet's bloodstream causing drops in blood sugar, blood pressure, and body temperature.

Liquid potpourris can cause chemical burns to the mouths of pets. Cats appear to be more sensitive, but fevers, respiratory difficulty, and tremors can be seen in both dogs and cats. In addition, cats (and some dogs) are attracted to long string-like objects including garland, tinsel, and ribbons. Although these are not poisonous, they can be ingested and that is where they can cause serious problems. These "linear (or string) foreign bodies" can get stuck in the pet's stomach or intestines and slowly saw through the tissue causing a potentially fatal infection of the abdomen. Surgery is the only treatment.

(continued) Play

it safe with your pets this holiday season. Keep dangerous items out of reach, secure trash cans, and do a "pet proofing" walk through of your home. While decorations are out, do your best to keep an eye on your pets or keep them separated from them to prevent exposure to these festive, yet potentially dangerous things. If you have any questions about the potential dangers of holiday plants, decorations, or foods, contact your veterinary office for answers.

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The Vermont Veterinary Medical Association is a professional organization of 350 veterinarians dedicated to compassionate animal care and quality medicine. For more information, visit www.vtvets.org or call (802) 878-6888.