

Holiday Safety Tips for Pets

Christmas time is always a special time of the year. Lets also make it a safe one for our pets by learning a few common sense rules that might apply for this time of the year.

Keep holiday candies (especially chocolate) off tables where pets could reach it easily. Pets are very attracted to this and will eat the whole bowl of candy. Chocolate could have a deadly affect on pets if eaten in sufficient amounts. Other foods are capable of causing health concerns too. Leaving the cooked turkey in an accessible location can be very inviting for a hungry pooch. I've known dogs to ingest a family's entire turkey... bones and all!! I shouldn't have to tell you how turkey bones could cause intestinal problems....not to mention the belly-ache from overeating! There are reports of health problems when pets eat grapes or raisins too. So careful where you place fruit baskets and baked goodies. Dogs and cats LOVE eggnog too... they will drink it, even if it has alcohol in it, and alcohol is a no-no for Fido.

Anchor your Christmas tree to the wall when you have cats around. Cats will be very attracted to the tree with all the shiny ornaments, etc. They often climb to the top and then the whole tree tips over. This could cause a fire if lights on the tree contact a flammable material. Speaking of fire... holiday candles can be extra hazardous when pets are around. Kitties are attracted to the flickering flames and a dog's tail could wipe candles right off a low table. Place them well out of reach from pets just to be extra safe.

Many decorations are problems for pets too. Remember that tinsel can be deadly to cats and dogs too. I wouldn't use any tinsel with a cat in the house. They are VERY attracted to it's shine and will chew or swallow it. It could cause an obstruction that requires surgery to remove. Also be careful with other linear foreign objects that are frequently used at Christmas... things like ribbon, string, thread, tape, and anything that "dangles" as a decoration. These will be ingested if your pets gets hold of them...and they are almost impossible to feel on examination. The damage to the intestines could cause death. A string of popcorn is especially dangerous when a hungry pet is around.

We must also be aware of our pets tolerance for cold temperatures. Any outside temperature below 40 degrees could have detrimental affects on our pets. A doghouse or garage only raises the temperature about 10 degrees. Bring them inside if a freeze is predicted. Be certain that sleeping areas have some kind of bedding to insulate them from the cold ground.

Also be aware that many holiday plants are toxic to pets. These are ones such as poinsettias, holly berries, and mistletoe. ALL parts of these plants can be poisonous or cause serious illness if ingested by your family pet. Be sure they are out of reach.

Finally, I really discourage people giving pets (puppies and kittens) as a gift for Christmas. Owning a pet is a long-term responsibility. All parties involved should consider exactly what you want in a pet, to get exactly what you want... instead of someone else's choice. Animals should never be put into sealed boxes to be opened as a present. Also, its not wise to have a pet be a gift to a child from Santa. If the puppy or kitten becomes ill, or has a problem discovered in the first vet visit...it becomes a difficult explanation to give a youngster about how Santa's present wasn't perfect. Many animal shelters suspend adoptions just prior to Christmas just to avoid the pet-gift seekers. IF a pet is your Christmas gift decision...make it a personal gift with a certificate to pick out the pet the receiving person chooses.

From all of us here at River Hills Animal Clinic we hope you have a happy and SAFE holiday season.

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