

# Ten tips offered on keeping pets safe during holiday festivities

Here are 10 ways to keep your pets safe during all of the holiday festivities:

- **The New Pet.** Holidays are not the best time to introduce a new pet to the household. All the excitement, noise and devi-

ation from the normal routine could make it difficult for a new pet — and any existing pets — to make the adjustment.

- **Pets as Gifts.** Consider seriously the choice to give a pet as a gift. One of the main rea-

sons animals are abandoned or taken to shelters is because they are unwanted. Don't contribute to this situation by giving a pet to someone who may not want it or be able to care for it. If you do choose to give a pet

as a gift, allow the recipient(s) to select the pet so they can find one that is right for them.

- **Treats and Chocolate.** Keep holiday treats and candies out of your pet's reach as they can make your pet quite

sick. Chocolate, particularly bitersweet and baking chocolate, can be toxic to dogs. If your dog eats chocolate, call your veterinarian or an animal poison control center immediately: ASPCA's Poison Control Hotline (888-426-4435, \$55 fee) or Pet Poison Helpline (800-213-6680, \$35 fee).

- **Leftovers.** Don't feed your pet holiday turkey or chicken, as the small bones or fragments can lodge in the throat, stomach, or intestinal tract. At the very least, too much human food may give your pet an upset stomach.

- **Guests.** Pets can become overexcited, confused or frightened by holiday guests. Keep pets in a quiet part of the house. When guests are over, watch for open doors and make sure your pets have ID tags on them in case they do get out. Remind guests that your normally friendly pet may want to be left alone.

- **Tree.** Make sure your tree is well secured. Avoid adding preservatives, aspirin or sugar to your tree's water, or keep the water covered. Tidy up around your tree and wreaths as sharp pine needles can puncture your pet if ingested.

- **Decorations.** Sharp or breakable ornaments and dreidels should be kept out of reach of pets, as should tinsel, string, and ribbon. If your pet ingests any of these items, it could experience serious internal injuries, or worse. Light strands, loose wires and electric cords can be a serious hazard to your pet, especially puppies, who may chew them.

- **Plants.** Mistletoe and holly are poisonous and should be kept out of reach of pets. If eaten, poinsettia plants can cause severe gastrointestinal upset. A list of other poisonous plants can be found at <http://www.oregonvma.org/petowners/plants.asp>.

- **Candles.** Never leave candles unattended, especially around puppies and kittens.

- **Stress.** The holidays can be a stressful time for everyone, even your pets. Even though your routine might change, try to keep your pets on their normal routine of feeding and exercise.

The Oregon Veterinary Medical Association is a nonprofit organization of veterinarians who are dedicated to helping people give their animals a high quality of life.

*Have a Happy and Healthy Holiday Season*

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