



Potter League™
Enriching Lives

Tips for a Pawsitively Happy Holiday!

The holiday season creates all kinds of wonderful opportunities for a curious cat or canine. As you bring out the decorations, put up the tree or celebrate with friends and relatives, you may be creating a hazard to your pets' health. Here are some holiday hazards to keep your pets away from this season:

- Many foods that people love can be toxic or even deadly to animals. $\frac{1}{4}$ of an ounce of unsweetened chocolate can harm a ten-pound dog. It can damage the heart muscle, nervous system and urinary tract of a canine. The darker the chocolate and the more ingested, the greater the damage. Did you know that coffee beans and grounds can produce the same effects in canines? Macadamia nuts and walnuts can cause weakness, lethargy, loss of coordination, tremors and vomiting in dogs. Grapes and raisins have been associated with acute kidney failure in dogs and rabbits, too (according to Arthur, cats are too smart to eat grapes). Onions inhibit an animal's ability to clot blood. Food containing any form of onions, including powder, should not be eaten by pets. Spicy or fatty foods can cause indigestion and even pancreatitis, a condition that often requires intensive hospitalization.
- Sugar-free candies and cookies made with xylitol, an artificial sweetener, are toxic to pets, especially dogs. Xylitol can lead to rapid drop in blood sugar, respiratory depression and loss of coordination, seizures and death.
- Yeast and uncooked bread dough, if ingested by an animal, can rise in the stomach, causing extreme pain, bloat, vomiting and depression. Surgery is sometimes required to remove a yeast blockage. And yeast, fermenting in the intestines can cause alcohol poisoning.
- Bones, especially poultry bones, can splinter when chewed, injuring a pet's trachea and intestinal tract or causing fatal blockages.

- Alcoholic beverages are known to cause vomiting, diarrhea, tremors, labored breathing, acidosis, coma and death in animals.
- Ingested nicotine, a stimulant, increases the heart rate, and can lead to pulmonary failure and death.
- Strings used to tie up meats and pop-up meat thermometers are tasty temptations for animals. If swallowed, they can cause intestinal obstructions.
- Holiday plants are another temptation for pets. They are best kept out of reach. Lily leaves, blossoms and stems are especially lethal to cats. When eaten they can cause kidney failure. Poinsettias, holly, English ivy, pine needles, amaryllis and hibiscus have all been known to cause digestive distress, ranging from nausea to vomiting, diarrhea and lethargy. Mistletoe leaves and particularly the berries are highly toxic to animals. If eaten, they can cause severe stomach upset and even heart failure.
- Tinsel, ribbons, dangling decorations and sparkly ornaments are just too enticing for most animals to stay away from. Many humans underestimate an animal's ability to swallow anything that looks like a toy. Again, this can lead to a serious intestinal blockage.
- Holiday candles, whether glowing on the Menorah or the Christmas buffet, can become a fire hazard, if discovered by a curious pet. Wires from holiday lights can cause electrocution, if chewed. Cover cords whenever possible or secure wires up and away from pets. Fragrant liquid potpourri can cause mouth damage, if tasted by a pet and the fumes alone can be deadly to a pet bird.
- Christmas trees present all kinds of holiday hazards. Anchor your tree securely or place it in a room away from climbing cats and wagging dogs. Glass ornaments obviously don't make good playthings, yet are very attractive to dogs, cats and birds. Christmas tree water can quickly become stale and harbor bacteria that makes it undrinkable. Water additives meant to preserve the tree can be poisonous to animals.

Contact your veterinarian immediately if you suspect your animal has ingested something toxic during the holiday season. Taking extra precautions early should prevent disasters during your holiday celebrations.

The Potter League for Animals is a full service animal resource shelter located at 87 Oliphant Lane in Middletown, Rhode Island. There is a large selection of dogs, cats and small animals for adoption. The Potter League also offer volunteer programs, obedience classes, pet loss support meetings,

humane education and much more. Contact us at 401 846-8276 or visit our website at www.potterleague.org