



## Keeping Your Pets Safe During the Holidays

### Decorate with Care

Your Christmas tree is sure to attract your cat or dog. Be sure it is well secured so that it won't come toppling down if your pet bounds onto it. Be sure to retrieve any ornament hooks that drop on the floor. Keep electrical cords and tree lights out of reach. Consider putting your tree in a room that can be closed off to your pets. Stagnant water can be a breeding ground for bacteria, which can lead to vomiting and diarrhea; don't let your pet drink the tree water. You might also invest in a tree stand with a cover that will keep your pet out.

### Dangerous Food

Chocolate, macadamia nuts, raisins and grapes, coffee, alcoholic beverages and even bread dough can be fatal if ingested in quantity. Be careful not to leave these foods on coffee tables in reach of pets, and be sure that the lid on the trashcan is well secured. Poultry bones can splinter and get stuck in a pet's mouth, obstruct his throat, or perforate his intestines.

### Holiday Plants

The poinsettia, though typically thought of as poisonous to pets, is fairly low in toxicity, but can cause digestive upset and irritation to a pet's mouth and stomach. Holly berries, on the other hand, are extremely toxic when ingested. Just a few berries will cause vomiting and diarrhea. Mistletoe also causes digestive system upset as well as irregular heartbeats and possibly cardiac shock.

### Other Holiday Hazards

Be sure small toy pieces, plastic model cement, crayons and paints are put away or out of reach when not in use, to prevent poisoning or

choking. Wrapping paper, ribbon and tape are particularly appealing to cats; remove them as soon as possible to prevent pets from chewing or eating them. Liquid potpourris, Styrofoam, tinsel, angel hair and other tree decorations can also be toxic if ingested, cause skin or eye irritation, or cause intestinal obstructions. If you suspect that your pet has ingested something poisonous, seek medical attention immediately.

### **Preventing the Great Escape**

With holiday guests coming and going, the front door will be opening and closing more than usual. An open door may be too tempting for some pets to resist, so be aware of where your pet is when you open the door. Be sure your pets wear collars with identification tags. If your pet does slip out, resist the urge to chase - which will turn it into a game. Instead, encourage him to come back to you by enticing him with a favorite treat.