

Holiday Safety for Pets

While you are trimming your tree and hanging your mistletoe this holiday season, remember that there are some aspects of the holidays that can be hazardous to our pets. Here are a few hazards to avoid:

Christmas trees pose many dangers to pets.

- Christmas tree water may contain fertilizers and bacteria. If ingested it could cause nausea, vomiting and diarrhea in your pet.
- Decorations such as ribbons are very attractive to pets, especially cats, and if ingested can cause intestinal obstruction.
- Sparkly lights are equally attractive, but can become life threatening if your pet decides to chew the cords.
- Ensure any tinsel, ribbons, ornaments and ornament hooks that fall to the floor are picked up immediately
- Secure your tree so that it can't be toppled or knocked over.

Mistletoe

Popular during the holidays, mistletoe can cause vomiting, diarrhea, difficulty breathing, collapse, erratic behaviour, hallucinations and death in pets.

Poinsettia

This beautiful holiday plant can cause irritation to the mouth, stomach and vomiting.

Macadamia Nuts

Although the toxic principle of macadamia nuts is unknown, they are dangerous food for dogs. Ingesting macadamia nuts can cause depression, hyperthermia, weakness, muscular stiffness, vomiting, tremors and increased heart rate.

Holly

Commonly used for decorating during the holiday season, holly can cause intense vomiting, diarrhea and depression.





Chocolate

Dogs and chocolate are a dangerous combination. Chocolate and any chocolate-related products are very dangerous for dogs. Chocolate contains caffeine and theobromine, a bitter alkaloid of the cacao plant.

Both caffeine and theobromine are nervous system stimulants. Since dogs metabolize theobromine more slowly than humans, they are highly susceptible to theobromine poisoning. In dogs, caffeine and theobromine can cause restlessness, hyperactivity, muscle twitching, increased breathing and heart rate, possible irregular beating of the heart, increased urination, excessive panting, increased blood pressure levels, seizures, coma and death.

Coffee, Tea and Cola

Since these foods contain caffeine, they can cause caffeine toxicity in dogs. Tea and cola also contain theobromine.

Grapes and Raisins

Grapes and raisins are highly toxic foods for dogs. Although the toxic component of grapes and raisins is unknown, ingesting a large enough amount can cause kidney damage or failure.

Never adopt an animal as a gift

The holiday season is not the ideal time to bring a new animal into your home, but if you have planned to add a new pet to your family during the holidays, ensure that you will be home to provide the care and attention your new family member will require as they adjust to their new environment. While planned pet adoptions are great, it is not recommended to give pets as “surprise” gifts to friends or family members.

The best holiday present for your pet is plenty of love and attention. Include your pet in your holiday activities and give him or her lots of attention, play time and appropriate exercise!

Want to learn more about pet safety? Visit www.crd.bc.ca/petsafety.