

TIPS FOR KEEPING YOUR PETS SAFE THIS HOLIDAY SEASON.



Christmas and other holidays can be fun for the whole family - pets included. However, there are some common hazards that may threaten your pet's well-being. Before decorating and celebrating, make sure that your home is pet-friendly. Decorate with care and with your pets in mind.

◆ **Christmas trees.**

Secure to a wall or ceiling hook with sturdy fishing line, this will help prevent the tree from tipping over should your pet jump on it purposely or accidentally.

Pine needles from real trees can cause irritation and harm your pet, as they are sharp and can injure a dog's gastrointestinal tract.

Artificial trees have bits of the tree that can easily be ingested by your pet, and because the plastic is not digestible, they present a choking or injury hazard to your dog or cat.

Try putting trees up high in places that are out of reach of pets. For large trees you can safely guard them with gates or you can keep your pets away from the tree altogether, especially when not supervised.

◆ **Select your ornaments.**

Pet friendly ornaments should be plastic or wood.

Avoid glass ornaments if all possible, but if you can't or won't, then hang glass ornaments at the very top of the tree, where pets cannot reach them.

If you have a cat that is tempted to play with the ornaments on your tree, decorate the bottom third of the tree with non-breakable, plastic or wooden ornaments.

◆ **Use garland, rather than tinsel** as tinsel, if ingested can cause intestinal obstructions.

Replace metal ornament hanging hooks with tightly knotted fabric - 1/4 inch ribbons. Do not use light-weight twine or yarn to hang the ornaments because it can slip easily over the branches of the tree and your pets can ingest it.

◆ **Tape down electrical cords** and keep tree lights out of reach.

◆ **Unplug all Christmas lights** when you're not home to supervise your pet.

Please note: Holiday lights are moderate to lethal toxicity, depending on the amount of fluid (methylene chloride) inhaled or ingested. Keep your pets away from them.

Wash your hands after handling Christmas lights, you will notice this warning on some Christmas lights warning labels.

◆ **Artificial snow and snow flock** also has low toxicity - dry particles are inert; however, toxicity from inhalation can occur if sprayed directly in the mouth or in close proximity to your pet.

◆ **Lighted candles** should be kept out of any pet's reach at all times.

Never leave lighted candles unattended, and be sure they are securely anchored so they won't be dislodged by the swat of a paw or tail.

Only use candles with domes or cylinders that enclose the flame or better yet use battery operated candles.

You can secure holiday decorations and candle holders by sticking a little piece of double sided 3M tape to the bottom.

◆ **Pine sap** mixed with water can create bacteria, making a poisonous drink for your pet causing vomiting and diarrhea. Make sure the base of the tree where the water goes is covered and secure. DO NOT add preservatives or aspirin additives to it.

HPR advises investing in a tree stand with a cover that will keep your pets out.

We also recommend **Scat Mats** to keep your pet away from the Christmas trees and Fireplaces.

The smell of a live or artificial tree may cause your pet to urine-mark it.

It helps to bring the tree into an isolated indoor room for a day or so, so that it smells more like "home".

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◆ **Holiday food** is one of the biggest reasons for emergency vet visits during the holiday season.

Rich, fatty foods can cause stomach upset, or even predispose pets to life-threatening pancreatitis or bloating.

Poultry bones can splinter and get stuck in a pet's mouth, can obstruct his or her throat, or intestines.

Most pet owners don't know that foods such as chocolate, macadamia nuts, raisins and grapes, coffee, alcoholic beverages and even bread dough can be fatal if ingested in by a dog or a cat.

Be careful not to leave these foods where pets can easily reach them, and be sure that trash cans have well secured pet proof lids or in a cabinet where pets cannot reach them.

Warn family members and guests not to feed holiday foods to your pets.

Always have a supply of your pet's favorite treats on hand and show your guest where your pet's treats are!

◆ **Choose plants carefully**

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 and should be kept away from pets at all times. Just a few berries will cause vomiting and diarrhea and a trip to the emergency clinic.

Mistletoe also causes digestive system upset as well as irregular heartbeats and possibly cardiac shock.

Plants like the hibiscus and those in the lily family, can cause digestive system problems and even renal failure.

If you must have these plants in your holiday décor, choose artificial ones to protect your pets.

And don't forget to check gift floral arrangements that are sprayed with chemicals to preserve them, many of these also have toxic flowers in them that can be very harmful to your pets.

◆ **Other holiday hazards.**

Children's toys can present a poisoning or choking hazard for pets.

Be sure small toy pieces, plastic model cement, crayons and paints are put away securely and out of reach when not in use.

Wrapping paper, ribbons, and tape also represent potential dangers always keep them out of reach from your pets specially when they are unsupervised..

Liquid potpourris, fireplace colors and salts, Styrofoam, tinsel, angel hair and other tree decorations can also be toxic if ingested, it can cause skin or eye irritation, severe respiratory distress, intestinal obstructions, etc.

If you suspect that your pet has ingested something poisonous, seek medical attention immediately.

Plastic bags can suffocate your pets, DO NOT let them play in them or with them.

Paper bags, are ok for pets to play with them, but please take the time to cut out the handles!

◆ **Prevent your pet from escaping.** With holiday guests coming and going, the front door will be opening and closing more than usual.

Do not trust family and guests, put your pets in a room with some classic music and visit with them from time to time.

Lock that room door and place a written sign on the door of the room that says: "**Pets Inside DO NOT OPEN**".

If your pets are dogs and need to go out for a potty break, walk them on a leash while guest are around.

If you decide not to do the above, make sure to "train" your family and guests to close the door properly when entering and exiting your home.

If you have gates in your backyard "**lock them**" and allow your guest to go in and out **ONLY** through one exit door.

Be sure that your pets have collars with identification tags - and that they wear them at all times. If you give your pet a bath and remove the tags, put them back on right away after the bath is over, do not delay in doing this.

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If your pet is not microchipped, this will be a good time to get it done.

If your pet escapes by accident, resist the urge to chase as it will turn it into a game. Instead, encourage him or her to come back to you by enticing him with a favorite treat or toy.

If you have cats, convincing him or her to come in with people they do not know may be challenging, but you can always try enticing him or her with their favorite food or a bit of catnip. If they do not come despite your efforts, they will most likely stay in the area and come back when they get hungry and everyone is gone.

Unless it is New Year and fireworks are going off. Just make sure pets are in and secure at all times!

◆ **Educate your guests.** If guests do not have pets, they may not know about cautions that seem like common sense to you.

Make sure that they know how your pets should be handled, fed and what needs to be kept out of reach.

It will only take one well-meaning relative to feed your dog dark chocolate to cause a trip to the veterinary emergency room or a child to get bit because he or she grabbed your dog the wrong way, for somebody to get hurt.

Make sure your pet has "down time."

Even though many pets are highly social, they may become nervous with all the activity and guests around the holidays.

Best practice is as we mentioned above, keep your pets quiet in a room until guests are gone.

◆ **Special needs pets** and pets with seizures.

If you have a special need pet it is best to keep stress levels at a minimum at all times.

IF YOUR PET SUFFERS FROM SEIZURES PLEASE KEEP IN MIND THAT BLINKING CHRISTMAS LIGHTS CAN TRIGGER A SEIZURE, DECORATING YOUR TREE WITH STEADY LIGHTS IS BEST FOR YOUR PET. KEEP THE PET AS QUIET AS POSSIBLE AND TALK TO YOUR VET REGARDING MEDICATION TO KEEP YOUR PET RELAXED DURING THE HOLIDAYS.

NEVER give "oral" valium to cats regardless of what your vet tells you, just one dose can send a cat into liver failure and there is no going back. Valium should ONLY be administered in injectable form to cats.

◆ **Holiday costumes** for your pets may be cute at get-togethers or in family photos with their holiday costumes, however pet owners should be aware that costumes have rubber bands to keep them securely in place on the pet, as well as dangling things, buttons, etc., these and pose a great danger to your pet if ingested.

After the fun of dressing up is over, please remove the pet's cute costume at once and never leave them with costumes unsupervised.

Rubber bands specially can cause choking and or intestinal injuries or both.

◆ **Going away for the holidays - visiting friends and family.**

If you are planning to go away for the holidays or even if you are visiting friends and family for the day and you decide to bring Fido or Fluffy with you.

Before you go anywhere, be sure to contact the destination parties in advance to make sure that your pet or pets are welcome in their home.

Any trip is very stressful for pets but more so during the holidays.

Especially if you own cats, cats are creatures of habit, they do not like change and they do not do well with change.

Cats stress very easily and stress brings out sickness in cats that you did not even know they had.

HPR recommends that you leave your pets at home during the holiday season and that you hire a reputable pet sitter to come and care for your pets at home or boarding them at a reputable boarding facility, although boarding them isn't the best for them either.

HOLIDAY TIPS FOR KEEPING YOUR PETS SAFE THIS HOLIDAY SEASON. Cont.



Do like we do, don't travel. :) Just kidding!

If you do decide to board your pet, make sure your pet is up to date on shots. We at HPR believe in titer checks and are not a fan of vaccines, because they cause more harm than good, but when boarding comes to play, vaccinations are a must to protect your pet from diseases and airborne viruses and they also required.

◆ **Air Travel HPR** doesn't recommend flying pets cargo, no matter what the airlines tell you.

The cargo hold is the cargo hold, it was designed to carry luggage and cargo NOT pets, hence the name.

There is no special accommodations for your pets in cargo, in the cargo hold, your pets become cargo.

The same way cargo shifts, your pet in the kennel will shift.

There is nobody to check on your pet until the flight lands, so if your pet has an emergency such as heart failure (which it happens with altitude and pressure), nobody will notice until the plane lands and the luggage is unloaded, and this is usually left for last!

We ONLY recommend air traveling with your pet if your pet can go in the cabin with you.

If you need to go long distance and are taking your pets with you to destination and they cannot go in the cabin, please look into alternate forms of transportation such as trains and automobiles.

Never ever give any form of tranquilizers to your pets when traveling by plane.

◆ **Pets as gifts.**

Do not give any animal as a Christmas gift.

Sadly many pets given as holiday gifts end up at shelter as soon as the holidays are over.

If you do want to give a pet as a gift, first and foremost make sure that the person you are giving the gift to wants a pet and welcomes the pet and that has the financial means to care for the pet for life.

Pets are expensive, having a pet today is not just a matter of a good heart and a loving home!

DO NOT buy a pet, go (preferably with the gift recipient) to a county shelter or contact a local rescue group, or better yet give that stray cat or dog a home, you will be surprise how good they clean up!

And yes, you will find purebreds are the county shelter.

If both, you and the gift recipient are in accordance about the "gift" here are some things to consider:

Puppies and kittens are not for seniors, unless there is a back plan in case something happens to the senior person. Cats specially when they are indoors and well cared for they can live up to 20 years.

Puppies and kittens may be just be too much for an older person to handle.

Puppies and kittens are best not in the hands of toddlers either, as toddlers do not measure force and they can harm an animal by grabbing him or her the wrong way.

Familiarize yourselves with different breeds and which breed will the best fit for the gift recipient.

Consider the recipients lifestyle, home all the time, travels all the time, not home much, not very patient, etc. etc., did the person ever had a pet or will this be his or her fist pet and things like that.

Consider other pets that are already in the home, if the household has senior pets, bringing in a puppy or kitten may cause conflict and cause the resident household pet to act up.

If there are other pets in the home please familiarize the recipient with methods and procedures about bringing a new pet home, and new pet introduction to the existing pets in the home.

If after reading all of the above you believe that you are better off not giving a pet as a gift, there are gifts that "pay it forward" that you can give your gift recipient, like the gift of sponsoring a shelter pet until, adopted.

There is no a better gift that telling your gift recipient that she or he is a guardian angel on earth! You can read about HPR's "Guardian Angel" program here: <https://hurricanepetsrescue.org/donate/hpr-guardian-angel-program/>

Keep the holiday season fun and safe for anyone - whether they have two or four legs!

Happy Holidays, to you and yours!
Hurricane Pets Rescue Inc.

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