

THE TWELVE HAZARDS OF CHRISTMAS

Keep your pets safe this festive season with our handy guide



By Dr Marina Perez, DVM MRCVS

With the Christmas build-up well underway, November and December can be a truly hectic time for most of us as we juggle parties, gift wrapping, food preparation and family visits.



It is also one of the busiest times of the year for Blacks Vets and unfortunately, the period where we see a sharp rise in emergency admissions to our Dudley Hospital. Although Christmas is a wonderful time of year for the whole family, it is often filled with extra dangers for our pets.



Here's our guide to the Twelve Hazards of Christmas to watch out for:

- Bones** - We know, it's hard to resist those pleading eyes, but every year we see the multitude of problems that eating bones can cause. Blockages, choking, vomiting and bleeding are all common when pieces of bone become stuck and sometimes these effects can be fatal. Please consider giving your dog a safe chewy toy instead.
- Cold weather** - As the weather turns frosty, we need to consider the implications for our outdoor pets. Now is the time to cover external hutches for rabbits or guinea pigs with thermal layers. Old towels and blankets are perfect. If possible, bring hutches inside or to a sheltered area such as a garage or shed.
- Tree Decorations** - Bright, colourful and interesting, Christmas decorations can be fascinating to pets. Unfortunately, they are usually very fragile and shatter easily, leaving razor sharp shards that can cause external cuts or internal damage if ingested. Please hang baubles higher on the tree and out of your pet's reach.
- Alcohol** - Yes, even your festive tipple could cause problems for a pet! Keep half-filled glasses off low surfaces and dispose of near empty cans and bottles in a bin with a secure lid as alcohol is highly poisonous to both dogs and cats. Left untreated,
- Chocolate** - Those carefully wrapped edible gifts under the tree often contain chocolate which can also be very toxic to pets. Dogs in particular can be drawn to the bright, rustling wrapping paper which makes a good game out of getting to the treat inside. Play it safe and store food-based gifts out of your pet's reach.
- Raisins** - Christmas pudding, mince pies and Christmas cake all contain raisins, currants and sultanas which can cause kidney failure when eaten by dogs and cats. Make sure food waste is carefully wrapped and disposed of to avoid a panic.
- alcohol poisoning** can cause seizures, tremors, heart problems and even death.

- Antifreeze** - With chilly Christmas weather comes frozen windscreens and antifreeze is our favourite shortcut to remove the ice. However, the chemicals in this product smell and taste delicious to cats and just a small amount can be fatal. That's why it's important to clean up any drips or spillages of product after you have finished de-icing.
- Ribbon and string** - Cats love to play with pretty ribbon and dogs are drawn to the lovely meaty taste of string that has been wrapped around a turkey. If either is consumed, it can become trapped in the intestines often requiring surgery to remove it.
- Lost pets** - Frosty fingers can easily lose grip on a lead during a winter walk or a cat may bolt whilst the noise and unfamiliarity of visiting friends and family disrupts



their routine. We see a rise in lost pets over the festive period and those that are microchipped mean that reuniting with their owners is much easier. Contact Blacks to make your pet's microchip appointment today, by visiting www.blacksvets.co.uk.

- Christmas lights** - Playful pups and kittens may chew through tree light cables causing electric shocks or burns to the mouth. Keep a watchful eye on your young pet if they are near the Christmas tree, or better still, skip lights altogether until your pet is a little older.

- Plants** - It's lovely to receive a green gift at this time of the year but please bear in mind that some varieties of plant can present a risk to pets. Mistletoe, Amaryllis, Poinsettias and Holly berries are all irritants and potentially toxic to your pets if digested.
- Parties** - And finally, it's a great time of year to welcome friends and family into your home for parties or visits and the house will be filled with new sights, sounds and smells for your pet. This can make some animals very anxious and it's important to consider their needs during this period. Ensure that they have a quiet, safe place to retreat to if they feel overwhelmed and try to preserve as much of their usual routine, such as walking and feeding time, as possible.

We truly hope that your Christmas is happy, healthy and safe for the whole family, but remember, should you need us, Blacks Vets will be on call 24/7 for emergency treatment at our Dudley Hospital. Tel: 01384 252509

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