

## Holiday Dangers

Be careful how you deck your halls! The holiday season is generally a time of family togetherness in which even our pets participate. One's thoughts generally are far from thoughts of injury; however, one must be aware of some important seasonal hazards in order to insure a happy holiday season.

### RIBBONS & TINSEL

These are of special interest to playful cats or dogs who see these materials as toys (or prey) to be chased, pounced upon, chewed or swallowed. These strings or "linear foreign bodies" can catch in the GI tract, leading to bunching of intestine as the body tries in vain to move the string or ribbon through. This is a life-threatening condition requiring surgery for correction. Do not allow animals to play with string.

### ELECTRIC LIGHT CORDS

These are also tempting to cats who like to play with string as well as to puppies who are teething and interested in chewing. If a pet bites through an electrical cord, it could result in a severe burn to the tongue which causes the pet's lung to fill with fluid, causing respiratory distress. This is also an emergency requiring immediate veterinary attention.

### CHOCOLATE

Many people do not realize that chocolate can be a poison. Unsweetened baking chocolate and dark chocolate carry a much higher dose of the toxin "theobromine" than milk chocolate, but even normal milk chocolate can be dangerous; a small dog sharing candy can wind up in big trouble. Clinical signs of chocolate poisoning include hyperexcitability, nervousness, vomiting, and diarrhea and death. Call your veterinarian immediately if you pet ingests chocolate.

### POINSETTIA

Consuming this festive-looking plant can be irritating to the mouth and stomach of the dog or cat that chews on or eats it. Contrary to popular belief, poinsettia is not otherwise specifically toxic.

### MISTLETOE

The fact that there are several types of mistletoe makes it difficult to predict the clinical signs of poisoning. Some mistletoes produce only stomach upset while others may lead to liver failure or seizing. Consider mistletoe to be a hazardous substance and keep it inaccessible to pets and children.

### LILLIES

Lillies from the species *Lilium* (Easter Lillies) or *Heimerocallis* cause severe, acute, often deadly kidney failure in cats.

### COOKING

Keep pets out of the kitchen during the hustle and bustle of the season. The last thing you want is for someone you love to get underfoot and get burned from spillage.

### DIETARY INDISCRETION

We all like to include our pets in Holiday meals along with the rest of the family, but try to keep in mind that sudden rich diet changes are likely to upset a pet's stomach. Vomiting and diarrhea are not uncommon. If leftovers are of an especially fatty nature, the pancreas may become inflamed and overloaded. This condition is serious and may require hospitalization.