

Keeping Your Dog Safe at Christmas

Holiday Hazards to Avoid with Pets in the Home

Christmas is a magical time of year but decorations, foods, gift wraps, and winter items hold hidden dangers for dogs. A few safety precautions can prevent trouble.

The Christmas season is upon us. It's a most wondrous time of year as holiday shopping, baking, and decorating fill our busy schedules. We put forth great effort to make every pie, every decoration, and every gift perfect. However, this merry celebration can harbor dangers for our pets. The beloved family dog tends to find his place in the center of all the commotion and care must be taken that the Christmas magic is not interrupted by a tragedy.

Kitchen Safety

- Tin foil, meat strings, and toothpicks can cause serious digestive problems if swallowed.
- Dough can expand in the stomach and cause severe problems if swallowed.
- Chocolate, coffee, and tea are very toxic for dogs. Even small amounts can cause diarrhea, seizures or death. Unsweetened baking chocolate and dark chocolate are most dangerous.
- Bones, cooked or uncooked, can tear or obstruct the digestive system.
- Sweets and greasy or spicy foods can cause pancreatitis which is a serious inflammation of the pancreas and can be fatal.
- Alcoholic beverages are attractive to some dogs, especially sweet alcoholic beverages such as eggnog. Remind guests to keep glasses out of reach of the dog and put away glasses after parties. A small amount of alcohol can be fatal.
- Garbage contains discarded food and the smells can be enticing for your dog. Keep garbage covered and out of reach.
- Plastic wrapping can obstruct the digestive system and cause severe problems if swallowed.

Christmas Tree and Decoration Safety

- Christmas trees should be secured to prevent toppling. Do not allow your dog to eat fallen pine needles or even artificial tree needles as they can be toxic or cause stomach irritation.
- Christmas tree water can contain poisonous pine tar or tree preservatives.
- Tinsel, ornaments, ornament wire hangers, angel hair, artificial snow, candles, and ribbon can all cause serious problems if swallowed. Many dogs think ornaments are toys and want to play with them.
- Poinsettias, Amaryllis and Mistletoe popular Christmas plants, but all of them are poisonous to dogs. Please keep them out of reach.
- Christmas lights can cause digestive upsets or electrocution if chewed.
- Electrical cords can cause electrocution or a fire hazard if chewed.

- Batteries can be toxic and cause intestinal obstruction if swallowed.
- Costumes and Christmas outfits are adorable on Scruffy but they should not bind or constrict, block the dog's vision, or have pieces that can cause choking if swallowed.
- Almost all Christmas plants, including holly leaves and berries, poinsettias, and mistletoe are poisonous or irritating to dogs if swallowed.

Outdoor Safety

- Antifreeze tastes sweet and many dogs are attracted to it. Just a few drops can be fatal.
- Hypothermia can pose a danger during severe cold. Puppies, old dogs, and sick dogs are most vulnerable. Dress your dog in winter clothing or restrict outdoor time. Provide snug shelter. Warm your dog quickly if he starts to shiver.
- Ice-melting chemicals and salt can irritate paws or cause digestive upsets if swallowed. You can use **Safe Paw Ice Melt (Pabby's Price \$17.99 for an 8lb. Jug)** which is child and pet safe. Booties and/or **Paw Balm (Muttliks Pawstik \$14.99)** can also help protect sensitive paws.

Tips for Avoiding Trouble

Provide your dog with a safe and comfortable place, such as a crate or a gated room, away from holiday dangers and the stress of unfamiliar guests and disrupted schedules.