

Keeping your Pets Safe at Christmas

9 out of 10 pet poisonings happen in their owner's home, and over 5 million dog owners unknowingly feed their pets harmful foods at Christmas such as chocolate, macadamia nuts, grapes and raisins.



Here is a list of the common household hazards for you to note keep your pets safe over the festive season.

1. Chocolate

Chocolate contains a stimulant called theobromine, a bit like caffeine, which, while tasty, is severely poisonous to cats and dogs. Dogs are especially attracted to chocolate but metabolise theobromine much more slowly than we do. Even a small amount of chocolate can make a dog ill and 200gms of dark chocolate can kill a 20kg dog.

2. Mince Pies and Christmas Puddings

All grapes, raisins, currants and sultanas are toxic to dogs as are any foods that contain them. So make sure that your dog does not eat Christmas cake, mince pies, Christmas pudding, etc.

3. Blue Cheese

While delicious to us, blue cheese contains a substance called roquefortine C to which dogs are extremely sensitive. Although it might smell tasty to your dog, do keep it out of their reach.

4. Macadamia Nuts

Often lurking in biscuits or eaten as a decadent Christmas snack, these nuts cause severe illness in dogs so enjoy them yourself but don't share with your dog.

5. Garlic, Chives and Onion

Found in many festive foods like gravy, stuffing and sausages, all Allium species are poisonous to dogs so beware when offering them any titbits from the Christmas table.

6. Alcohol

Alcohol can cause severe liver and brain damage in animals. As little as a tablespoon can lead to problems for your cat or dog so make sure that those special Christmas drinks are well out of the reach of your dogs and cats.

7. Household Plants

Many common Christmas household plants are poisonous to our 4 legged friends. Foliage like poinsettia, mistletoe and ivy are all mildly toxic to both cats and dogs. Lilies from the Liliaceae or Hemerocallis species are very dangerous for cats. Eating just two or three leaves, or even drinking water from a vase containing them can be potentially fatal.

8. Snow Globes

Imported versions of the ever popular snow globe can contain antifreeze. As little as one tablespoon can be fatal for a cat.

9. Candles

They may create a cosy atmosphere, but candle flames can burn paws and the curious noses of furry friends. There is also fire risk if your candle is knocked over by an excited pet.

10. Decorations

While playing with Christmas decorations may be tempting to your pet, it can have nasty consequences.

For example:

- Eating tinsel or tree ornaments can cause dangerous blockages in your pet's stomach or intestines.
- Cats are curious and will try to chew on anything, including fairy lights, which can burn and even electrocute them.
- Salt dough ornaments may be tasty to dogs. The mix of flour and salt with water can cause a potentially fatal salt toxicosis.
- Eating a large amount of wrapping paper could cause an obstruction in the stomach.