

Holidays, Having a Good Time and Keeping our Furry Friends Safe

Can all of these things be accomplished? Of course they can with a little forethought and planning.

While we are busy trying to figure out whether it's Merry Christmas and Happy Hanukkah or the much safer Happy Holidays, we also need to put some energy and thought into keeping our pets safe. Now is a good time to do that before the true holiday craziness begins, with cooking and shopping and decorating and school plays to attend and party invitations to be sent out and and

Many of us will have a Christmas tree. How could that beautiful symbol of the holiday be any kind of a problem you say? Cats might find the tree the perfect thing to climb. That may destroy some decorations and possibly result in a knocked over tree with your cat or dog underneath the tree.

Pine needles have an oil on them that if ingested can cause gastrointestinal upset. That can mean vomit and diarrhea. Most of us like to avoid that. Ugh! Other plants (i.e. poinsettias, mistletoe and holly) can be poisonous if ingested by your pet.

One of the very worst things your pet can ingest is tinsel and string and ribbon. Sammie's Friends recently tried to help a kitty that had string wrapped around its tongue and destroyed its intestines. In spite of herculean efforts to save the kitty, the kitty did not make it. So so sad. Tinsel, string and ribbon are equally bad for dogs.

Pets are often fascinated with various Christmas lighting. Be careful that these things cannot be chewed into by your pet causing electrocution.

It is a huge temptation to share our yummy (and usually rich; during the holidays) human food with our pets. It is best to have a rule "No human food" and ask your guests to follow the rule too. Onions are used a lot in holiday cooking and are very bad for pets. Too much rich food will most assuredly result in vomiting and diarrhea at a minimum and pancreatitis, if the reaction is more serious. Your pet will be very ill and in extreme cases can die from pancreatitis. Rum soaked fruitcakes are not pet food, neither is alcohol and chocolate.

When guests visit for the holidays, purses should be put up where pets cannot reach them. Often purses contain medicines, hand sanitizers, and sugarless gum with the sweetener, Xylitol, which is absolutely deadly to pets.

Some pets are very social and love all the comings and goings of visitors. If so let the party begin. Some pets are shy and become very stressed by the chaos and noise. If your pet falls in this category put the pet in a safe room with things to do and keep your pet from being traumatized. Holidays should be a pleasant time for our pets too.

Sammie's Friends wishes everybody a great holiday season with family, friends and pets. Please keep everybody safe by planning ahead. When you do your shopping remember your pets need a present too.

Cheryl Wicks is the President and Co-Founder of Sammie's Friends