

# Holidays, Having A Good Time and Keeping Our Furry Friends Safe

Admittedly this may not be the best holiday season with the resurgence of the Covid-19 pandemic, but let's do the best we can. Our gatherings will be more limited and we may have to be more creative in finding ways to connect with family and friends. Economic times are not good for many and we may have to cut way back on what we spend for both the holiday dinner and presents. This may be a great time to get back to the basics. The one thing that is free is "love". The best "love givers" in the whole world are your pets. They are overjoyed to give you their love.

Even though the holidays may be greatly modified there are still things to keep in mind to keep our furry friends safe during whatever celebration we do have.

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, and possibly even getting injured. 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 tried desperately 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 any visitors to follow the rule too. Onions, frequently used in holiday cooking, are 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 are alcohol and chocolate. It is a good idea to have some appropriate pet treats for your cat or dog. That makes it less tempting to give them human food, which isn't so good for them.

If you have any visitors, be sure that purses are put 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 having visitors. If so, let the fun begin. Some pets are shy and become very stressed by changes and additional 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.

Be sure that you and your pet get some exercise during this time. It reduces stress, is a good bonding time for you and your pet and we are all safest outside where the virus is least likely to be contracted.

Sammie's Friends wishes everybody a happy holiday season with family, friends and pets. Please keep everybody safe by planning ahead. If you are able to do any shopping remember your pet needs a present too.

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