



**MANOR**  
VETERINARY CLINIC

## **Holiday Hazards**



**Top tips to keep your pets safe and healthy this  
Christmas and New Year**

The time around the Christmas and New Year holidays can be hectic and stressful, but it is important to keep an eye on your pets as there are additional hazards at this time of year.

Puppies and kittens, who are naturally curious, are most at risk from eating something they shouldn't. However any pet may potentially get into trouble and it is important to supervise your animals and reduce the risks as much as possible.

## Poisoning

Most people now know that **chocolate** is poisonous to dogs. The ingredient in chocolate which causes toxicity is **theobromine**. Dogs can't metabolise this chemical well and dark chocolate is especially dangerous as it contains a high concentration of theobromine. Signs may be delayed for up to 10 hours and include vomiting, diarrhoea, nervousness, tremors, seizures and panting.

**Raisins** and **grapes** are toxic to dogs, causing gastrointestinal effects and kidney failure. **Onions** can cause vomiting and haemolytic anaemia. **Xylitol**, an artificial sweetener causes insulin release in dogs causing low blood sugar and may result in liver failure. **Macadamia nuts** may also be toxic to some dogs.

Dangerous plants include **poinsettias**, **mistletoe**, **ivy** and **holly** as well as the **Christmas tree** itself. Common signs from poisonous plants include salivation, vomiting and diarrhoea.

Fir tree oils can cause irritation to the mouth, the **pine needles** may cause gastrointestinal irritation, obstruction or puncture or get stuck in the fur and pads. The water may contain pesticides, preservatives or fertilisers and cats can climb in the tree and knock it over if it is not properly weighted.

Decorative plants and flowering bulbs, such as **narcissus** or **peace lilies** may be given as presents. These are also toxic to pets. **Lilies** are especially poisonous to cats and can cause tremors or seizures, followed by acute kidney failure which may result in death. All parts of the plant are poisonous, including the sticky pollen.

## What should I do if I think my pet has been poisoned?

A rapid response is critical. The sooner the treatment, the higher the chances of recovery. If you suspect that your pet may have been poisoned:

- Remove the pet from the source of intoxication
- Don't let other people handle your pet as disorientated animals may become aggressive
- Allow animals to drink water which may dilute ingested poisons
- If your pet has a toxic substance on its skin or coat, wash the animal to prevent further absorption if safe to do so
- Contact the clinic on **01303 273203** for advice and prepare to take your pet in to the clinic. If you are calling out of hours, listen to the message to obtain a mobile telephone number to contact the emergency vet.

## Other food hazards

Apart from the toxic foods listed above, any **new food** or excess of food can cause vomiting, diarrhoea through dietary intolerance and sometimes pancreatitis. Make sure that your pet is on their normal diet and avoid the temptation to give too many treats.

Turkey or fish **bones** can become lodged in the mouth, cause damage to the mouth and oesophagus and sometimes get stuck or perforate the gut. Don't offer your pet any bones and make sure that the rubbish bin is well sealed.

## Decorations, lights and toys

A curious animal may eat **toys, baubles, decorations or cracker gifts**. The signs of an intestinal foreign body include lethargy, not wanting to eat, vomiting, diarrhoea and abdominal pain. Sometimes the foreign body will pass through, but all foreign bodies have the potential to cause an **intestinal obstruction**. If the signs are severe or worsening, an x-ray may show if there is an obstruction and surgery will be required to remove it.

**Ribbons**, packaging strings, tinsel, strings of fairy lights and cat toys can cause a **linear foreign body** when swallowed. As well as obstructing the gut and causing intense pain and vomiting, linear foreign bodies are especially dangerous as the material can cut through the gut and cause perforation. Make sure to pick up any loose ends and pack away strings to prevent a curious animal from eating them.

**Electric cables** can cause electrocution if chewed; young animals and rabbits are particularly at risk even if the wires are protected e.g. with hosepipe. Always unplug lights and wind up the cable when you leave the room. **Candles** can easily singe a curious cat's whiskers or tail and are a fire hazard if knocked over.

## Stresses

As the holidays are such a busy time, the effect on pets may be overlooked. Animals may become anxious and withdrawn, cats may overgroom or get cystitis. Rearranging the house, changes in routine, having unfamiliar visitors and New Year fireworks can all be very stressful for pets.

Provide a safe refuge for your pets with food, water and their favourite bedding. Installing an Adaptil or Feliway diffuser a few weeks beforehand and using Zylkene may all help to ease these holiday stresses.



**All of the staff at Manor Veterinary Clinic would like to wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.**



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[www.manorveterinaryclinic.co.uk](http://www.manorveterinaryclinic.co.uk)



Written and illustrated by Megan Davies MA VetMB MRCVS, 2011.

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Manor Veterinary Clinic, Pent Road, Shearway Business Park, Folkestone, Kent CT19 4RH  
Phone: 01303 273203 | Fax: 01303 271994 | Email: [office@manorveterinaryclinic.co.uk](mailto:office@manorveterinaryclinic.co.uk)