



Protect Your Farm Pet

Keep your farm pet safe from toxins during your holiday festivities.

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Protect your farm dog or cat from holiday decorations and foods that could contain toxins that are harmful to their health. As you decorate your farm home and bake goodies for your holiday celebration, keep in mind that holiday items might contain toxins that could endanger your farm pet. Below is a list of common holiday-related decorations, plants and food items that the veterinarians at Pet Poison Helpline recommend keeping away from pets.

Holiday Ornaments

Holiday decorations, such as bubble lights, might contain poisonous chemicals harmful to your farm pet if it chews on them. Methylene chloride inside bubble lights can cause depression, aspiration pneumonia, and irritation to the eyes, skin and gastrointestinal tract.

Tinsel

What looks like a shiny toy to your cat can cause severe damage to a cat's intestinal tract if swallowed. Ultimately, cats run the risk of severe injury to or rupture of their intestines, and treatment involves expensive abdominal surgery.

Holiday Plants

Although poinsettias are known to be toxic, holiday bouquets containing lilies, holly or mistletoe are more worrisome.

"Lilies, including tiger, Asiatic, stargazer, Easter and day lilies, are the most dangerous plants for cats," says Dr. Ahna Brutlag, assistant director of Pet Poison Helpline. "The ingestion of one to two leaves or flower petals is enough to cause sudden kidney failure in cats."

Other yuletide plants such as holly berries and mistletoe can also be toxic to farm pets and can cause gastrointestinal upset and heart arrhythmias if ingested.

Alcohol

Because alcohol is rapidly absorbed into the bloodstream, it affects pets quickly. Ingestion of alcohol can cause dangerous drops in blood sugar, blood pressure and body temperature. Intoxicated animals can experience seizures and respiratory failure. Additionally, foods containing alcohol and unbaked dough containing yeast should be kept away from pets, as they may result in alcohol toxicity, vomiting, disorientation and stomach bloat.

Holiday Foods

It is not wise (and in some cases quite dangerous) to share holiday treats such as baked goods, chocolate candy and other rich, fattening foods with your farm pets. Keep your farm pet on its regular diet over the holidays, and do not let family and friends sneak in treats. Take note of foods that affect your pet's health:

Foods containing grapes, raisins and currants (such as fruit cakes) can result in kidney failure in dogs.

Chocolate and cocoa contain theobromine, a chemical highly toxic to dogs and cats. Ingestion in small amounts can cause vomiting and diarrhea and in large amounts can cause seizures and heart arrhythmias.

Many sugarless gums and candies contain xylitol, a sweetener that causes a life-threatening drop in blood sugar and liver failure in dogs.

Leftover, fatty meat scraps can produce severe inflammation of the pancreas (pancreatitis), leading to abdominal pain, vomiting and bloody diarrhea.

Imported Snow Globes

Recently, imported snow globes were found to contain antifreeze (ethylene glycol). As little as 1 teaspoon of antifreeze when ingested by a cat or 1 to 2 tablespoons for a dog (depending on their size), can be fatal. Signs of early poisoning include acting drunk or uncoordinated, excessive thirst, and lethargy. While signs may seem to improve after eight to 12 hours, internal damage is actually worsening, and crystals develop in the kidneys resulting in acute kidney failure. If your farm pet ingests antifreeze, see your veterinarian for treatment immediately.

Liquid Potpourri

Scented oils can cause serious harm to your cat. A few licks can result in severe chemical burns in the mouth, fever, difficulty breathing and tremors. Dogs are not as sensitive, but should still be protected. Scent your home with a non-toxic candle kept safely out of your farm pet's reach instead.



To protect your farm pet over the holidays, educate yourself on common household toxins, and pet-proof your home accordingly. If you think your pet has been poisoned, contact your veterinarian or Pet Poison Helpline at 800-213-6680 with questions or concerns.