



Pet Safety At Christmas

It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas! December is an eventful time and can mean new decorations, inviting smells, visitors and loud noises. No one wants to ruin the Christmas cheer with an emergency trip to the vet! Here are some tips on how to keep your pets safe during the Christmas period.

Decorations

There are many potential hazards on and around the Christmas tree.

- Make sure your Christmas tree is safely secured as curious kittens and cats who love to climb may cause the tree to topple over.
- Glass baubles can break and cause injury to the mouth and/or paws, therefore, plastic baubles can be a much safer option.
- Tinsel and ribbon may look pretty, but if chewed and swallowed it can become a choking hazard or get stuck in the intestines and cause a blockage or strangulation.
- If your pet likes to chew or your puppy/kitten is teething, keep them away from any Christmas lights and power chords to prevent accidental electrocution or a fire hazard.



Festive Food

We all like to indulge over the Christmas period and our four legged friends don't want to miss out either. However, don't give in to those puppy dog eyes as not everything we eat is good for our pets.

Christmas Ham: Whether it be the fat, bone or meat, a Christmas ham is a no-no for pets.

Meat:

1. Raw meat: can harbour bacteria (*Salmonella* and *Escherichia coli*) and while they can cause gastrointestinal upset to our pets, they can also shed these bacteria and pass them on to us!
2. Cooked meat: may have spices, gravy or marinades on them and these can be potentially harmful to pets. If you feed your pet food scraps, make sure the meat is free from gravy, marinades and also animal fats like skin and crackling.
3. Cooked bones: become brittle and can splinter causing injury to your dog or cat's digestive system, as well as their teeth. Smaller bones can become a choking hazard and should be out of reach. Always make sure to appropriately dispose of any cooked bones to stop curious noses sniffing them out of the bin and becoming a potentially deadly midnight snack later on.
4. Meat soaked strings: If your pet ingests these tasty strings that are often used to bind meat during the cooking phase, they can get stuck in the intestinal tract and require emergency surgery.
5. Meat and vegetable skewers: can damage the oesophagus, stomach or intestine and can be life threatening.
6. Fat and other off-cuts: Any food high in fat (sausages, bacon, bone marrow) can cause problems ranging from mild gastrointestinal upsets (vomiting, diarrhoea) or the more painful and potentially life threatening disease 'pancreatitis'.



Chocolate: Theobromine and caffeine are two key ingredients that can be found in chocolate and can make your pet sick. The toxic level depends on the size of your pet and the type of chocolate ingested. Darker chocolate is more potent, with as little as 130g potentially a lethal dose for a 10kg dog. Signs to watch out for include vomiting, diarrhoea, restlessness, excitement, seizures, depression, coma and death.

Sweets and Lollies: Xylitol is an artificial sweetener found in gum, mints and sugar-free lollies. It is extremely toxic to dogs and can cause low blood sugar (hypoglycaemia), seizures, liver failure and even death.

Christmas Cake / Pudding: Sultanas and raisins are often present in Christmas cakes and puddings, and can cause significant and often irreversible damage to your pets kidneys. The most common symptom of ingestion is vomiting. There may be lethargy, lack of appetite and diarrhoea. Signs of acute kidney failure may include nausea, lack of appetite, vomiting, diarrhoea, abdominal pain, excessive thirst and excessive urination.

Onion, Garlic, Chive and Leeks: All four belong to the Allium family and can cause irritation to the gastrointestinal tract. Signs of toxicity may include mouth irritation, nausea, drooling, abdominal pain, vomiting and diarrhoea. The most harmful effect of Allium toxicity is the targeting of red blood cells, causing anaemia from the rupture of red blood cells. Other warning signs may include elevated heart rate and respiratory rate, collapse and often, death. As tempting as it may be, never feed left over barbecue scraps to your pets, particularly those with onion in it.

Macadamia Nuts: If your pet ingests macadamia nuts they can cause severe abdominal pain, the inability to walk and an increased heart rate.

Foil / Plastic Wrapping: The wrapping surrounding chocolates and lollies can also be dangerous if ingested, as it may cause an intestinal obstruction in your pet.

Alcohol: The smallest amount of alcohol can be lethal to pets. Foods that contain alcohol can also be dangerous.

Presents: Children's toys and other small parts can be a choking hazard to curious pets. Batteries found in toys and gifts are highly toxic. Whilst silica gel sachets that are often found in moisture sensitive packages can cause gastrointestinal problems if ingested.

Guests

If you are hosting celebrations it may be a good idea to exercise your pet(s) before guests start arriving. This can help reduce stress and make them more inclined to nap once the festivities are underway. If your pet gets particularly stressful during this time, there are pheromone diffusers (eg Adaptil for dogs and Feliway for cats) that can be plugged into the wall ahead of time with the aim of promoting a feeling of reassurance, relaxation and well-being. Many pets may not be used to children in their environment and may become frightened, possibly resulting in scratches or bites.

Unusual Sounds

There are many “unusual sounds” that can cause panic or distress to your pets during the festive season. Christmas crackers, balloons, party poppers, loud music, popping corks and fireworks are some of the sounds that can be unsettling to pets. Something as simple as turning on the television or playing music that is loud or has white noise can be a good way to muffle any outside noise. Never tether a dog to an anchor point as a panicking dog can choke themselves on a collar or lead.

Pheromone diffusers may help to reduce the intensity of fear in your pet for mild phobias/anxiety, but for more severe cases your veterinarian may discuss other options.

Fireworks can scare many pets and indirectly pose risks to animal safety as they try to escape the loud noises. Create an environment that is safe and secure - that is, an environment where they are unable to dig or claw their way out, jump over / through fences or break through glass doors to escape. This may mean keeping your pet in a well-ventilated room, switching lights on, or simply closing curtains and blinds to reduce/block out visual stimuli.



It is crucial that you keep your pet’s microchip details up to date. If your pet gets lost and the microchip is scanned by a veterinarian or at a shelter, you are able to be reunited with your lost pet without a delay.

If you have an emergency or your pet requires urgent attention, please contact your nearest veterinary clinic or after hours clinic:

Brisbane North Emergency

BVECCS (Albany Creek).....07 3264 9400
Animal Emergency Centre (Kedron).....07 3084 6020

Brisbane South/East Emergency

Animal Emergency Services (Underwood).....07 3483 0463
Animal Emergency Centre (Woolloongabba).....07 3456 0500

Brisbane West Emergency

Animal Referral Hospital (Sinnamon Park).....07 3172 0593
Animal Emergency Services (Jindalee).....07 3062 7686

Gold Coast Emergency

Animal Emergency Services (Carrara).....07 5515 0414
Animal Emergency Centre (Varsity Lakes).....07 5593 4544

Sunshine Coast Emergency

Animal Emergency Services (Tanawha).....07 5445 1333
Animal Emergency Centre (Noosaville).....07 5353 7005

Brisbane Animal Ambulance

24 hour transport North and South of Brisbane.....0411 237 112

Lost or Found Pets

RSPCA.....07 3426 9999
Moreton Bay Regional Council.....07 3205 0555
Logan City Council.....1300 156 426