



Keep your pets safe this Christmas



The festive season brings joy to many, but it can be a stressful time for pets.

Excited children, lots of visitors and a change in their routine may cause many pets to become anxious and even frightened. The strange objects with unfamiliar smells such as Christmas trees, candles, decorations and gifts that come into the home can cause concern, especially to cats who are very sensitive to changes in their environment.

Decorations, wrapping paper, ribbons, and crackers are just some of the things that pose a danger to your pet if swallowed or even played with. To ensure that every member of your household remains safe and enjoys the festive period please follow these simple tips.

Help your pet feel safe and relaxed

Many cats will want to hide when visitors come to the house, whereas most dogs will show excitement. However, sometimes that excitement or arousal is a sign of stress.

Make sure that both cats and dogs have a safe hiding place that they can retreat to if things get too noisy for them. This may be a bed in a quiet room or it could be a 'safe haven' or den made especially for them under the stairs or in a quiet place in the house. Never disturb your pet when they are using this resting place.

If your dog does tend to get excited when visitors arrive, make sure he has had plenty of exercise prior to their arrival and give him a food toy such as a Kong to keep him occupied as people arrive. For those that jump up or become worried by visitors arriving put them in another room or behind baby gates until your visitors have sat down then allow them to come and say hello. This will be much less exciting for your dog and he is more likely to settle down more quickly.

Festive food

Pieces of turkey or other meats may be a treat for your pet and in small quantities will probably not be harmful to your pet (unless they have a sensitive tummy) but, too much extra food will lead to weight gain.

A lot of human foods are harmful for pets, including coffee, alcohol, chocolate, onions, garlic, Xylitol (sweetener), yeast dough, salt, spicy food, some nuts, grapes, raisins and fatty foods. It is much safer to give your pet a normal pet treat you know they enjoy.

Decorations

Make sure your Christmas tree is well secured so that it does not topple over if your cat decides on a climbing expedition! Shatterproof decorations are advisable, particularly on the lower branches.

Put the lights on the upper branches of your tree so your pet can't chew on them causing shards of glass or plastic to cut their mouths or stomach lining. Make sure the electric wires are covered or hidden so they can't be chewed which may result in shocks and burns. Similarly, tinsel can twist around your pet's intestines if swallowed, so either avoid it or put it high up on the tree. If you have a real tree, cover the base so that your pet cannot drink the water, which may be contaminated with preservatives.

Never leave pets alone with burning candles as inquisitive noses and paws can be burned. A wagging tail may knock one over causing a fire. Open fires should be secured with a fire guard to avoid singed fur or burns.

Christmas plants

Sadly many of the traditional festive plants such as holly and mistletoe are poisonous to pets so make sure they are out of reach. Other poisonous plants (flowers, leaves and bulbs) include Lilies, Narcissi and Amaryllis.

Avoid leaving your pet alone with the Christmas tree as the pine needles can cause intestinal problems if ingested.

Presents

Make sure you throw away any small objects, ribbons, metallic wrapping tape or pieces of plastic that have been discarded after opening gifts as they can be easily swallowed causing choking or intestinal blockages. Also make sure that batteries are not left lying around as these will cause burns to your pet's mouth if chewed.

Your vet is here to help

Feliway and Adaptil diffusers can help anxious cats and dogs and are available from your Vet. The synthetic pheromones contained in these products mimic the chemicals exuded by the bitch or queen when their puppies and kittens are born. They provide a sense of safety and security for the youngsters.

Do talk to your Vet if you have any concerns for your pet during the festive period.

If you follow these few simple tips you and your pet should have a safe, happy Christmas.

Wishing you and your pets a safe, happy and peaceful Christmas

