

Holiday "Pet-tiquette" 101 --Tips for Keeping Your pet Safe and Happy During the Festive Season

By Dr. Dan Carey Veterinarian and Director of Technical Communications at The Iams Company (as published in the Pinscher Patter, Dec 2000)

Editor's Note: The following information is provided as a reminder about care of our dogs during the holidays and winter weather. Be sure to pass this article on to any of your puppy buyers who are purchasing a puppy at this time of year.

With an abundance of sweets and decorations in the home, and with the onset of colder weather, the holidays can be a dangerous time for a dog. Owners should be aware of things they can do to ensure their dogs have a healthy holiday season.

Decorations Are Not Doggie Treats - Make sure your pets have plenty of their favorite toys around so they're not tempted to play with holiday decorations. Try to keep Christmas lights, electrical cords, tinsel and ornaments out of their reach.

Skip the Scraps - Just because we eat a lot during the holidays, it doesn't mean our pets should too, especially when it comes to "people" food! As tempting as it may be to throw your dog a holiday cookie, or give him some of the holiday feast leftovers, it can create havoc with his digestive system. If you want to give your dog a treat, give him something that is healthy and nutritious. Premium dog treats are a good choice.

Poinsettias: Point Them in the Other Direction - These festive holiday plants - in addition to holly, amaryllis and mistletoe --can be harmful for pets if ingested. Put them in places that are out of paws reach. Make sure to call your veterinarian immediately if your pet gets its paws on any of these things.

Include Your Pets in Stocking Fun But Don't Stuff Them With "People" Treats - Toys, a new bed, games and dog treats are great gifts but sugary snacks are a no-no, especially chocolate. It contains theobromine, a chemical that can be extremely harmful to dogs.

Clean the Paws - There's nothing better than a white Christmas, but watch out for salt sprinkled down on streets and sidewalks during winter months. Although it's a safety measure for people, it can be harmful to dogs and cats. Make sure to

clean the salt off their little feet as it can irritate them.

I Double-Dog Dare Ya! - Ever licked a flagpole or another outdoor metal object on a bitterly cold day? That's the uncomfortable feeling pets experience when they are fed outside in metal bowls during the winter. Make sure to give them food and water in plastic dishes when the temperature drops to prevent their tongues from getting frozen to the bowl.

Watch 'Em Like a Hawk - If you let your dog out on his own, don't forget about him! During warmer months, he might enjoy a leisurely stay in the backyard, but when it's cold, he'll want to do his business quickly and come right back in.

Don't Forget to Attend to Their Needs - Pets often get upset when lots of activity derails them (and their owners) from their normal routine, especially dogs. Make sure your dog is fed and exercised on schedule. If lots of company has made him nervous, give him the option of going into his crate in a tucked away area. This way he'll feel safe and protected.