

Keeping pets safe in the festive season

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Pet owners are reminded to take special care of their animal friends during the festive season, and hot summer holidays. Credit: University of Melbourne

Christmas can be exciting and full of treats for us, but full of new dangers for pets warns veterinarian Dr Leonie Richards from the University of Melbourne's U-Vet clinic in Werribee.

Festive tips for pets:

- Chocolate – is toxic to dogs and cats, even in small quantities
- Avocadoes and macadamia nuts – can be toxic to dogs
- Fatty foods like turkey skin, pork crackling, sausages meats – can lead to inflammation of the pancreas due to the high fat content
- Onions and garlic – can cause gastric irritation and anaemia if they are consumed in large quantities
- Grapes and raisins – can cause acute kidney failure
- Christmas decorations and cooked bones- if eaten can cause obstruction of the intestine and require surgery
- Snake bites- avoid walking dogs in long grass
- Heat stress- all pets need water and shade and to rest indoors over 30 degrees

Some of the main risks to pets over the holiday season are from food including ingestion of cooked bones and Christmas decorations that can cause [intestinal obstruction](#), and pancreatitis from fatty meals.

"We often want to treat our pets with special food at Christmas, but this can lead to disaster.," Dr Richards says.

"A common mistake at Christmas is to give the dog the ham bone, or the fatty off cuts of food. These foods often can cause pancreatitis, the symptoms which include acute vomiting, this condition can be life threatening and is a very painful miserable condition for your dog to get," Dr Richards says.

"Nuts, chocolate, sultanas, raisins, and similar foods can all be toxic to our four legged friends, so make sure that you keep these goodies out of reach, and don't give as treats. "

"If you need to give your pet a Christmas treat, pet stockings normally

have harmless toys or treats. And they can have some meat from Christmas dinner, just no bones and no fat."

Christmas decorations and lights can be tempting for puppies and cats to play with, but unfortunately they can accidentally ingest them, which usually results in surgery.

Once we get through Christmas, New Year's Eve comes along. If you know that your pet is noise phobic, don't leave it until the last minute to seek help, there are many strategies that can be put in place to prepare them, and sometimes medications can also be useful.

During summer heat all pets need cool water and a shady spot, preferably indoors on days over 30 degrees, with heat stroke signs being heavy panting, drooling and staggering.

Owners also need to keep an eye on their pets for snake-bite, signs are drooling, enlarged pupils, weakness and shallow breathing.

"As for all pet emergencies the best thing is to keep pets cool, calm and still while getting them to a vet as soon as possible. Owners should remember to call ahead to check their vet is open during holiday times. Snake bite on a limb should be bandaged but do not apply a tourniquet."

Provided by University of Melbourne

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