

# Top 10 pet health tips for the holidays

**H a l l o w e e n ,** Thanksgiving, Hanukkah, Christmas, New Year's Eve and Kwanzaa – no matter what you're celebrating, pet owners need to remember to keep their pets safe and healthy for the holidays.

"Veterinarians often see an uptick in the number of problematic calls during the holiday season," explains Dr. Larry R. Corry, AVMA president. "Whether it's an exposure to chocolate or fatty foods or pets upset due to unexpected guests or costumed visitors late at night, the holidays can present problems for pets. The AVMA urges all pet owners to include the health and safety of their pets in any plans for the holidays."

Here are the AVMA's top 10 pet tips for holiday safety:

1. Be wary of holiday

decorations; pets often consume them. "The animal raids the Christmas tree, for example, and this can be unhealthy for the pet and very upsetting for the pet owners," explains Corry. "If they consume enough tinsel or other decorations, it can cause a blockage that requires surgery."

2. Flowers are another common holiday feature that can result in an emergency visit.

Poinsettias, Amaryllis and mistletoe are on the list of common holiday plants that can be dangerous and even poisonous to house pets who decide to eat them, Corry says.

3. Just like people, some pets are better at dealing with houseguests than others.

If you know your pet has

a problem with visitors, work with your veterinarian for solutions. For severe problems, your veterinarian may recommend medications or even boarding the animal.

4. Don't let your pet climb the Christmas tree. If the tree falls over, your pet could be injured. Consider tying the tree to the ceiling or a doorframe using fishing line.

5. Cover Christmas tree water to keep animals from drinking it. The sap from live Christmas trees can make your pet sick.

6. Many people believe that people food makes good treats for their pets, but this isn't the case. Many common ingredients in a holiday feast – like onions, garlic, chocolate and artificial sweeteners – are poisonous to pets. And dogs

that consume an excessive amount of fatty foods, by cleaning a turkey carcass pulled from the trash, for example, can develop a life-threatening condition called pancreatitis.

7. Whether they are Halloween candies or Christmas chocolate, keep sweets out of your pet's reach, particularly while you're out.

A pet that consumes chocolates while you're away at work, for example, might be too sick for your veterinarian to save by the time you get home.

8. Unplug decorations while you're not around. Cats and dogs are often tempted to chew electrical

cords.

9. Keep any gift that includes human food out of a pet's reach.

With their sensitive sense of smell, dogs and cats can find those wrapped treats and open them when you're not around.

10. Candles are a common part of many holiday celebrations. Make sure that you keep lit candles out of a pet's reach, because the animal could light themselves, or your home, on fire.

The AVMA offers a great deal of information on its Web site, [www.avma.org](http://www.avma.org), including a free brochure on common household hazards and a free video about common household poisons.

## A Picture-Perfect Turkey

The first step in roasting a picture-perfect turkey, say the experts, is to start with a quality roaster. Here are some tips to help you choose one:

- Avoid flimsy disposable roasters that can be unsafe and environmentally unfriendly. Instead, choose a Granite roaster, which is very inexpensive, environmentally safe and will last a lifetime.

- Porcelain-on-steel roasters provide an even heat distribution for uniformly cooked,

beautiful turkeys. Most hardware and retail stores carry a line of speckled porcelain-on-steel roasters.

- Dark-colored roasters absorb the oven's energy and evenly distribute it.

- Roast your turkey at a constant 325° to 350° F. A 16- to 24-pound turkey takes approximately 12 to 15 minutes per pound.

- Add water or broth to the pan to baste with and to keep the meat moist. Baste

every 30 minutes.

- Use a meat thermometer to ensure thorough cooking. The deepest portion of the breast should read 170° F; the thigh, 180° F.

- Once finished, let the bird rest for about half an hour so the juices settle before carving.

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