

## 5 Pet Safety Tips for the Holidays



“The holidays are a time of happy celebration with family and friends, but it’s important to remember our pets. House guests, festive foods, decorations, and outside gifts can all pose a risk to the health of cats and dogs. Purina vet, Dr. Zara, shares her tips for a seamless holiday season.”

### **#1. WATCH OUT FOR RIBBONS, BOWS, AND DÉCOR**

Gift ribbons and decorations can be very harmful if ingested by pets. “As soon as gifts are opened, take the ribbons away and the wrapping paper,” shares Dr. Zara, “Ribbons can be fun, but your dog or cat needs to know how to play with it properly. My cat used to love pieces of wrapped up, crinkled up paper. So, you can play chase and fetch with appropriate toys, but not ribbons.” Household décor with moving or hanging pieces can also pose a threat, so be sure to watch for these items.

### **#2. MARK HAZARDOUS GIFTS AS “NON PET- FRIENDLY”**

As you keep a watchful eye on what is brought into your home for the holidays, it’s important that you remember the same when you are a guest. A great way to do this is add a gift tag if the item is not pet-friendly. That way, homeowners can put gifts away from the reach of curious cats and dogs.

### **#3. HOLIDAY PLANTS CAN BE POISONOUS**

Pets are very curious, so holiday “plants are another one to look out for. At Christmastime you can have new plants in the house that are poisonous to pets. Lilies are particularly toxic to cats. Azaleas, holly, mistletoe, and poinsettias are more examples of poisonous plants. So, being cautious and aware of what’s coming into the house is important,” says Dr. Zara. “Out of curiosity, pets may sniff and eat them.”

### **#4. DANGEROUS FOOD INGREDIENTS FOR PETS**

Holiday dishes tend to have ingredients that are great for humans, but can be harmful for pets. “So, when it comes to Christmas, we often have a lot of raisins or grapes in our food. Mince

pies, plum puddings, at least we do back in Ireland where I come from,” shares Dr. Zara, “these ingredients can be, unfortunately, super toxic for our pets. Chocolate is another one that we don't want our pets eating at Christmastime. Chewing gum is, another sort of innocuous looking food stuff that you might have around but it contains an ingredient called Xylitol which again is toxic to our pets. So, being cautious and aware of the food that you have and making sure that your pets don't have access to it is vital particularly at celebratory times when we have more around.”

#### **#5. KEEP PURSES AND JACKETS HIDDEN**

Keep your purses and jackets away from animals – items like prescriptions, medicines, or chewing gum with Xylitol can be harmful to pets if they get into a pocket or handbag on the floor or countertop. “Ibuprofen is a classic one that is very poisonous to our pets. Decongestants that we might have in the winter months can also be, be very poisonous,” says Dr. Zara. Be sure to have a designated area in your home for these items.