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When the season to be merry is upon us and life becomes a blur of shopping, frantic present wrapping and card writing, more shopping and endless trips to the post office, thinking about your pets needs can become lost in the Christmas mix.

There are a number of potential hazards to be mindful of during the festive season so read on and feast your eyes on all the Vets Now tips to ensure you and your pet have a happy, safe and stress free time at Christmas...

## Stick To Your Usual Routine

Even though the festive season is upon us it is still important to stick as closely to normal feeding and walking patterns as we can in order that our pets are not put under any undue stress, as a change in routine can often cause pets to become anxious and unsettled.

## Feeding

For most of us Christmas means lots of great food and tasty treats but whilst a one off nibble on some leftover's won't do your pet any harm try to resist the temptation to overindulge your pet (after all with pet obesity becoming a serious problem for many UK pets we certainly don't want to make it worse!)

## Treats

Did you know, pets can easily choke and experience serious internal damage from snacking on cooked bones, that macadamia nuts can cause poisoning and that caffeine can be fatal..?! Well if not why not check out our straight forward guide on 'what foods to avoid feeding pets'!

## Christmas Decorations

One of the nicest things about December is getting the house ready for Christmas. However, pets, like humans, tend to find the lure of Christmas sparkle irresistible, so Vets Now would urge pet owners to be mindful of the following when adding the seasonal touches to your home this Christmas:

If you have a real tree, sweep up the fallen needles regularly as these can easily get stuck in your pet's paws or throat and trim the lower branches to avoid poking accidents. If possible, try to fence off your Christmas tree from your pet and never leave your pet unattended in a room with a Christmas tree.

Make sure your Christmas tree is stable and well anchored so that your pet can't pull it over. Do not hang sweets or chocolates from your tree. These will be too tempting for your pooch to resist and chocolate is highly toxic to dogs and can result in death if even a small quantity is consumed.

No Christmas tree is complete without fairy lights but stray cables and wires may be tempting for your pet to nibble on. To remove the risk of electrocution, please ensure that all cables are out of reach of pets and tape down any loose ones.

Cats in particular love trying to knock baubles from the Christmas tree so try to use unbreakable decorations. Avoid using glass or fragile decorations which can break easily, cutting paws and if ingested, can cause serious gastrointestinal complications. Tinsel and ribbon should be avoided, or confined to the higher branches of your tree, as these can be attractive to pets and are dangerous to the gastrointestinal tract if your pet swallows them.

## Exercise

It's easy to slip out of your normal routine at Christmas with endless parties, visitors and dozing in front of the telly, but if you're one of the UK's millions of dog owners, you'll have no excuse for getting outside (and escaping the Christmas washing up!) and getting some fresh air and exercise for you and your dog. With the extra hustle and bustle with visitors, children, the noise of the television, music and computer games etc, your dog will thank you for a bit of peace and quiet and exercise! Why not check out our 'Guide To Winter Walks' for more top pet exercise tips.



## Toys

Once Santa has been our homes often look like a toy store, so when possible try to ensure children's' toys are not left lying around if they have small parts that your pet could tear or chew off and choke on. What's more when it comes to children and your pet keep a close eye on your pet to make sure they don't get over excited with all the Christmas fuss!

## Visitors

Christmas can be a busy time with visiting friends and relatives so make sure your pet doesn't make an escape in the commotion, and ensure all the excitement of having visitors doesn't distress your pet by simply keeping an eye on them or letting them relax in an unoccupied room.

## Festive Foliage

The finishing touches to every home at Christmas often come in the form of plants and flowers; however, certain types of plants are highly toxic and can even cause death. Poinsettia, Holly, Mistletoe, Amaryllis, Lilies and Yew tree are poisonous to pets and must be kept well out of reach.

Poinsettia can cause drooling, oral pain, and vomiting and Mistletoe causes vomiting, laboured breathing, shock, and even death from cardiovascular collapse if ingested.

*Vets Now advises owners to seek immediate veterinary treatment if you think your pet may have ingested parts of any of these plants.*

## Hidden Dangers!

Christmas is a busy time and it's easy to become consumed with all the activities and forget about the potential hazards your pet might be faced with. To remind you of some of the most common hazards at home, Vets Now has compiled a list of the top '12 Household Hidden Dangers' - after all prevention is the best cure!

## Merry Christmas

So with these Pet Owner Christmas Hints and Tips in your mind its time to put the fire on... sit back... sip on some mulled wine... tuck into a mince pie and enjoy Christmas with your pet - **Hope Santa is good to you!!!**