

Winter Pet Health Tips

As the holiday season has drawn to a close, friends and family are gone but the cold winter blues are still in full swing for you and your pets. There are many post holiday hazards that may seemingly go unnoticed. Here are a few things to remember to keep your furry friends safe and healthy until spring returns.

First, the family Christmas tree has been removed but can unknowingly be a hazard for Fluffy and Fido. Artificial snow, angel hair, tinsel and broken ornaments pose great risk if ingested and swallowed. Please dispose of trees quickly preferably by recycling and remove all of these potential hazards from your home. Likewise many holiday plants while bringing great cheer previously can bring grave consequences to your dog or cat. Poinsettias and mistletoe are both toxic and cause stomach problems. Yew is highly poisonous and flowers like Christmas cactus or Amaryllis are dangerous if eaten. Take great care to keep these out of reach from your pet following the holiday.

Chocolate and festive treats are a heavenly tradition but may cause severe problems if your pet eats them. Theobromine and caffeine are present in various concentrations from low in white chocolate to very high in baker's chocolate. The amount and type of chocolate eaten by a pet will determine the severity of exposure. If your pet ingests chocolate you should contact your veterinarian. If dangerous levels are eaten intervention may save your pet's life.

Holiday food and leftovers are great with family but tempting Rover with scraps can play havoc with his life. Turkey bones can splinter and puncture the stomach or intestines while high fatty meals of skin or drippings can cause severe intestinal upset and even a fatal pancreatitis. It is best to stick to the usual diet and avoid any dietary change.

As the mercury dips there are other concerns. Many animals cannot tolerate the severe winter temperatures for long. Watch out for ice between the toes and make sure that their coats are well groomed. Like us, a shabby coat will do little good against the cold. Provide fresh water daily and take care with antifreeze and de-icing products that are harmful. Clean up any coolant spills and consider pet safe products around your household.

Taking a little precaution this post holiday season can keep you and your four legged family safe and ward off those winter blues.

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