



Missouri German Shepherd Rescue (MoGS)
Doggie Health & Wellness Team
Wellness Wednesday Series on Canine Health

HOLIDAY GREENERY & DECORATIONS



“O Christmas tree, O Christmas tree, how lovely are they branches “ We all know the classic song.

But do we all know just how sick those lovely branches, the tree water, tinsel, flocking, holiday plants and decorations can make our pets?

Think about all the pretty and “innocent” decorations that spring up in our homes during the holidays. Poinsettias. Mistletoe. Popcorn strings. Pine boughs and wreaths. Christmas cacti. Amaryllis. Christmas lilies. Table and mantle decorations. Angel hair. Flocking. Breakable ornaments. Tinsel.

All a veritable minefield for unsuspecting pets who get excited and decide to have a little holiday revelry of their own by chewing and chomping on these lovely goodies!

Protect your pet by removing some of these too-fun-temptations.
Then BE VIGILANT!

- **Christmas trees**

- **TREE WATER:** The sap contains oils that can be dangerous. If you add preservatives to the water, they can contain toxins (but ingredients are not labeled). At the very least, the water – which we don’t change – is a great breeding ground for yucky bacteria
- **SECURE YOUR TREE:** Pets are infamous for climbing or running into trees and wham! - toppling them over. Ornaments break, tree water spills and pets may eat/drink them
- **AVOID TINSEL:** It’s attractive to pets and although the material isn’t toxic, it can wrap around your pet’s intestines and cause a major intestinal blockage
- **LOW HANGING ORNAMENTS:** put breakables and edibles (glass, aluminum, candy canes, etc) high up in your tree to deter your pets from playing with/chewing on them



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- POPCORN & CRANBERRY STRANDS: they're fun but attractive to pets – and the string they're on, if swallowed, can easily wrap around your pet's intestines and cut them off – a frightening and deadly event
 - ARTIFICIAL TREES: plastic 'needles' or wire 'branches', if chewed, can cause GI obstruction or perforation
 - FLOCKING: if you love flocked trees, keep your pets away! Ingesting large amounts of flocking can cause intestinal obstruction. And some brands of flock are made from silica - which can be sharp and seriously irritate the mucus membranes and GI tract
- **Holiday greenery & plants**
 - Greenery is luscious to look at but deadly to eat. Your pet doesn't understand that
 - Many holiday plants cause vomiting, diarrhea, lethargy, difficulty breathing, or erratic behavior. If you see these signs, call or run to the vet NOW!
 - Among the most common poisonous holiday plants for pets:
 - Poinsettias - not as deadly as once thought, but the milky sap from leaves and stems can cause nausea, vomiting, GI upset
 - Lilies - extremely dangerous to cats, can cause some GI upset and nausea in dogs
 - Christmas cacti – vomiting, diarrhea
 - Holly - vomiting, diarrhea, depression. Leaves and berries not as toxic as stems
 - Amaryllis - drooling, vomiting, drop in blood pressure, slowed breathing, abdominal discomfort
 - Mistletoe - GI upset, cardiovascular depression, difficulty breathing, vomiting, diarrhea, behavior change (and so often set on a table after stealing a kiss!)
 - Pine needles - oils/sap irritate the mouth and can cause excessive drooling or vomiting. If ingested the needles are not digested easily - if at all - and can cause GI irritation, vomiting, nausea, obstruction, perforation
 - Holly berries and other berries on fresh plants can be poisonous
- **Candles and lights**
 - We love candles, but try the new flameless ones. SO much safer for little paws! Hot wax causes serious burns and if licked/eaten means an immediate trip to the vet
 - Snow globes and some "bubble type" lights contain poisonous chemicals. If your pet topples and breaks one, get to the vet immediately
 - Twinkling or flickering lights are attractive to many pets, just like lasers. And some pets like to chew, swat or topple things. Even a broken tree light bulb can cause serious injury (external cuts, internal cuts if swallowed)





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- **Presents**
 - Tissue paper, wrappings, ribbons, bows – all so pretty. And so deadly if swallowed by your pet. Thousands of pets arrive at emergency clinics during the holidays with severe intestinal blockages due to chewing / swallowing these pretties
 - Plastic from shrink-wrapped gifts, foam packing peanuts, and other packing material will quickly cause an intestinal blockage if swallowed. Always be aware where your pets are and what they're doing -- and pick up all wrappings and packing materials immediately. At the very least, make it a practice to put them high up out of reach of your pets.
- **Cords and batteries**
 - Cords are everywhere to plug in tree and decorative lights. Protect and hide the cords under carpets, special matting, etc. The last thing you want is an electrocuted pet
 - Batteries are t-o-x-i-c. But they're everywhere during holiday gift giving and decorating. Keep up high and out of reach. One dog knocked a battery-operated candle off the window sill, the battery spilled out, and the dog chewed on it – and barely survived.



Be aware.
Be vigilant.
Enjoy the holidays and decorate away –
with an eye to what's safe and what's risky for your pets!

KEEP VET PHONE NUMBERS HANDY: Your vet, and the closest emergency vet!

ASPCA ANIMAL POISON CONTROL CENTER: (888) 426-4435 Keep this number very close by!
The Center is run by the ASPCA and is flooded during the holidays. A \$65 consultation fee may be applied so have your credit card handy too. <https://www.asPCA.org/pet-care/animal-poison-control/people-foods-avoid-feeding-your-pets>
<http://www.petpoisonhelpline.com/poisons>