

KEEPING PETS HEALTHY DURING THE HOLIDAYS

Dr. Kenneth Drobatz, Chief of the Emergency Service at the Ryan Veterinary Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania, offers the following tips to keep pets healthy, and out of the emergency room, during the holidays.

FOOD

- Maintain your dog and cat's regular diet. Treats of turkey, ham, gravy, cookies and other goodies can lead to gastro-intestinal upsets (diarrhea and vomiting).
- Dispose of all bones carefully so that pets cannot get them. Poultry bones are particularly dangerous as they splinter and can perforate intestines or lodge in the esophagus.
- Keep chocolate, macadamia nuts, and alcoholic beverages out of pets' reach. They are toxic to animals.

DECORATIONS

- Keep pets away from tinsel. Dogs and cats like to eat it, and tinsel (particularly plastic tinsel), can cut the intestines and cause severe injuries. If you suspect your animal has ingested tinsel, contact your veterinarian at once.
- Electric wires pose another hazard, particularly to puppies and kittens that may try to chew the wires. If they succeed, they can suffer electric burns or electric shock that can cause seizures, heart problems, loss of consciousness and, eventually, accumulation of fluid in the lungs.
- Glass ornaments are hazardous as they break easily; pets can ingest the splinters, cutting their mouth or intestines.
- Ornament hooks, when swallowed, can damage the mouth or esophagus and should be kept out of reach.
- Dough ornaments, because of high salt content, are not good for pets. Ingestion can cause vomiting, diarrhea, and in severe cases, seizures.
- Holly and mistletoe berries are toxic to pets when ingested. Symptoms include vomiting, bloody diarrhea, and dehydration.

GIFTS FOR YOUR PET

- Give toys that are too big to be swallowed or get caught in the animal's throat. Don't give anything with a string attached, and remove bells or squeakers from toys. All these things could be swallowed.
- The best gifts you can give your pet during the holidays are play and quiet time with you. And for your dogs, regular walks are always welcome.

Ryan Veterinary Hospital has a 24-hour emergency service that can be reached at 215-898-V911 or visit our website www.vet.upenn.edu

The Matthew J. Ryan Veterinary Hospital at Penn is a veterinary teaching hospital, seeing 31,000 small animal patient visits a year. Of those visits, approximately 13,000 are seen through the emergency service, which is open 24 hours per day, 365 days per year, and is staffed by emergency medicine clinicians and emergency/critical care specialists, as well as nursing specialists in emergency/critical care, augmented by on call specialists. In an emergency, please call 215.746.V911 (215.746.8911). To make a non-emergency appointment or for more information about our specialty clinics, please call 215.746.VETS (215.746.8387) weekdays between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. The Matthew J. Ryan Veterinary Hospital is located on the University of Pennsylvania campus in West Philadelphia at 39th and Spruce Streets.