

# **HOLIDAY SAFETY FOR YOUR GREYHOUND**

It's holiday time again!! Can you believe it? This is a time when friends and family get together, parties are planned and the hustle and bustle and joy of the season fill our homes. That hustle and bustle can also distract us from the safety of our pets, Greyhounds as well as other dogs and cats in our homes.

This article will help you prepare your home for a safe and happy holiday season. Compiled from many online articles, it's long, but a great reminder of all the little things we can do to keep our pets safe and happy during the holidays and all year long.

## **WEATHER RELATED ISSUES:**

- When ice and snow are on the ground, be aware that your dogs pads will get cold FAST. Take them for shorter walks, or buy some booties to cover up those tootsies. (You may also get some interesting video footage for your files of the first time your dog wears them!) Booties will help not only with the cold, but to keep salt and chemicals off of your pet's feet as well as prevent cuts from ice along your walking route. If pets lick salt and chemicals off their feet, they can become ill. If you're not using booties, be sure to rinse your Greyhound's feet off with cool water when you get home to remove any residue.
- Check your gates: buildup of snow or ice may prevent your gates from closing correctly. Please make sure your gates are closed and latched before letting your dog out in the yard.

## **SAFETY PROOFING A HOLIDAY HOME**

- Trees provide a great temptation for cats to climb and dogs to chew on, so holiday trees should be well secured to prevent accidents.
- Animals are attracted to bright, moving lights so candles should be kept on high shelves. Candles as well as fireplaces should be constantly supervised since embers, sparks and wax can injure pets.
- Other holiday products that can harm pets include snow globes (many of which contain harmful antifreeze) and artificial snow, which can cause reactions if inhaled.
- Holiday plants including ivy, holly, mistletoe, hibiscus, poinsettia, lilies and Christmas greens all have various levels of toxicity. Position these high off the ground to avoid dangerous ingestion mishaps.
- Pine needles, when ingested, can puncture holes in a pet's intestine. So keep pet areas clear of pine needles.
- The extra cords and plugs of holiday lights and other fixtures can look like chew toys to pets. Tape down or cover cords to help avoid shocks, burns or other serious injuries. Unplug lights when you are not home.
- Resist the temptation to tie ribbons around pets necks for the holidays. The pets can tighten ribbons resulting in choking or hang themselves if the ribbon is caught on an object.
- Dogs will often play with glass ornaments as if they were balls and serious oral lacerations can result. Sharp ornament hooks can also become imbedded in your pet's mouth or esophagus. Place ornaments that are shiny, or could be swallowed or broken high up on your tree. Larger, less intriguing ornaments can go near the bottom.
- Decorating trees with food is asking for problems. Candy canes and gingerbread people can be as enticing to your dog as they are to children. We know of one diabetic dog who ran into some problems with regulating her disease because she was stealing candy canes off of the tree.
- Popcorn, raisin, or cranberry garlands are beautiful, but can cause an obstruction when eaten, requiring surgery.

- Because tree preservatives are often sugar-based (and inviting to dogs) and because the water stands so long, the water in the tree stand often harbors potentially harmful bacteria. Fertilizers, insecticides, or flame retardants that were used on the tree may also get into the water. Cover the stand with a tree skirt or use other means to prevent access to the water.
- Very important: do not put aspirin in the water (some folks do this thinking it will keep the tree or plant more vigorous). If a pet ingests the aspirin-laced water his health or even life can be at risk.

## **HOLIDAY TREATS**

- No table scraps for pets! Fatty meats, gravies and poultry skin can cause pancreatitis, gastritis, enteritis, colitis and other gastrointestinal problems. Bones put pets at risk for bowel obstruction or perforation and choking.
- No chocolate for four-legged friends. It contains theobromine, which is highly toxic to dogs and cats when eaten in even small quantities. Problems from ingestion range from diarrhea to seizures and death. Unsweetened baking chocolate and dark chocolate are the worst culprits, but all chocolate, fudge, and other candy should be placed out of your dog's reach.
- Pets should celebrate with home-cooked dog and cat treats. Recipes are available on the Internet.
- Coffee, and tea contain dangerous components called xanthines, which cause nervous system or urinary system damage and heart muscle stimulation. Alcohol can cause serious intoxications in pets, and many dogs are attracted to it. Every year hundreds of dogs die after a single bout of alcohol consumption.  
Clean up glasses after holiday parties. Dogs are often attracted by the sweet taste of drinks, especially eggnog.
- Bones from fish, meat, or poultry can also cause problems if swallowed. Even small bones can splinter causing lacerations (tearing) throughout the intestinal tract. So, no matter how big or how little they are, be sure to keep bones (other than those that are specially sterilized and treated) away from your dog. American made chews, Kong toys, and raw knuckle bones would be better alternatives.
- Uncooked yeast dough can expand and produce gas in the digestive system, causing pain and possible rupture of the stomach or intestines.
- Grapes and raisins contain an unknown toxin, which can damage the kidneys.
- Macadamia nuts contain an unknown toxin, which can affect the digestive and nervous systems and muscles of dogs.
- Remember, dogs have an exceptional sense of smell – juices on plastic or aluminum foil left on countertops are very tempting. If ingested, plastic or foil wrap (cellophane candy wrappers or food wrap) can cause choking or intestinal obstruction.
- Meat-soaked strings from rump roasts are also enticing. Ingestion can cause a surgical emergency called a '[linear string foreign body](#)' in the intestines.
- Xylitol gum can make your dog very ill. Make sure all gum products are up and away from where your Greyhound can reach them.

## **PETS AND PARTIES**

- An influx of holiday guests may frighten or agitate animals, making them more prone to barking or even biting.
- Pets can easily slip out through an open door as guests come and go -- keep a steady eye on pets and be sure they are wearing current identification tags. Use baby gates if necessary.
- Tobacco products can be fatal to pets, if ingested. Signs of poisoning develop within 15 to 45 minutes and include excitation, salivation, vomiting, and diarrhea. Pets may develop seizures, collapse and die from cardiac arrest. Keep cigarettes, cigars, tobacco, nicotine gum and

patches, and ashtrays out of the reach of pets. Empty ashtrays frequently since cigarette butts contain about 25% of the total nicotine in a cigarette.

- A quiet room, away from the commotion with water and food available can be a retreat for an over stimulated dog and help him be more comfortable.
- Cleaning products such as disinfectants get a lot of use during the holidays as we spiff up our homes for visitors. Remember, many of these products can be toxic to your pets.
- Holiday guests and other activity can be very stressful and even frightening to pets. It can also trigger illness and intestinal upset. Make sure pets have a safe place to retreat in your house. And make sure they are wearing current I.D. in case they escape out a door when guests come and go.
- Reduce stress by keeping feeding and exercise on a regular schedule.
- Always make time to care for your pets. Some folks get lax about walking their dogs, and a few resort to letting pets out on their own. This puts the animal in danger, while also leading to nuisance complaints and dog bite incidents. Don't take a holiday from responsibly caring for your pets.
- When pets are stressed by holiday activity or during travel, they may require more water. Dogs typically pant more when they feel stressed. Keep fresh water available for them to drink.
- If you suspect that your pet has eaten something toxic, call your veterinarian and/or the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center's 24-hour emergency hotline at 1-888-4-ANI-HELP.
- Tell guests and remind household members to keep medication, toiletries and other potentially harmful items out of the dog's reach - and NOT to feed the dog any unauthorized foods. Remember, fatty foods can make a pet extremely ill.
- Have healthy pet treats handy so that your guests can indulge your pet safely. And if you want to share holiday flavor with the family dog, add a bit of white turkey meat or defatted broth to her bowl.
- Never leave dogs and children alone together. Always have an experienced adult supervise, no matter how well behaved the dog is. Anything can happen, especially with kids.
- Keep a pet first aid kit accessible.

Are you travelling this holiday season? Here are some quick safety tips.

### **Holiday Travel Stress Savers:**

- Get a tag listing your temporary location and cell phone number. You can also create a temporary tag for each of your destinations using waterproof tape and an indelible marker.
  - Pack a flashlight for night-time dog walks, along with lots of plastic bags.
  - Remember to take a first aid kit. You don't want to get caught in a road or other emergency without one...you can use it for people and pets alike.
- With all of the festivities, do not forget to relax and spend some quality time with your pet. Your dog will think that is the best gift of all.