

Thanksgiving Pet Safety



Thanksgiving is a special holiday that brings together family and friends, but it also can carry some hazards for pets. Holiday food needs to be kept away from pets, and pet owners who travel need to either transport their pets safely or find safe accommodations for them at home. Follow these tips to keep your pets healthy and safe during the holiday.

Poison Risks

Overindulging in the family feast can be unhealthy for humans, but even worse for pets: Fatty foods are hard for animals to digest. Poultry bones can damage your pet's digestive tract. And holiday sweets can contain ingredients that are poisonous to pets.

- **Keep the feast on the table**—not under it. Eating turkey or turkey skin – sometimes even a small amount – can cause a life-threatening condition in pets known as pancreatitis. Fatty foods are hard for animals to digest, and many foods that are healthy for people are poisonous to pets – including onions, raisins and grapes. If you want to share a Thanksgiving treat with your pet, make or buy a treat that is made just for them.
- **No pie or other desserts for your pooch.** Chocolate can be harmful for pets, even though many dogs find it tempting and will sniff it out and eat it. The artificial sweetener called xylitol – commonly used in gum and sugar-free baked goods – also can be deadly if consumed by dogs or cats.
- **Yeast dough can cause problems for pets,** including painful gas and potentially dangerous bloating.
- **Put the trash away where your pets can't find it.** A turkey carcass sitting out on the carving table, or left in a trash container that is open or easily opened, could be deadly to your family pet. Dispose of turkey carcasses and bones – and anything used to wrap or tie the meat, such as strings, bags and packaging – in a covered, tightly secured trash bag placed in a closed trash container outdoors (or behind a closed, locked door).
- **Be careful with decorative plants.** Don't forget that some flowers and festive plants can be toxic to pets. These include amaryllis, Baby's Breath, Sweet William, some ferns, hydrangeas and more. The ASPCA

offers lists of plants that are toxic to both **dogs** and **cats**, but the safest route is simply to keep your pets away from all plants and table decorations.

- **Quick action can save lives.** If you believe your pet has been poisoned or eaten something it shouldn't have, call your veterinarian or local veterinary emergency clinic immediately. You may also want to call the ASPCA Poison Control Hotline: 888-426-4435. Signs of pet distress include: sudden changes in behavior, depression, pain, vomiting, or diarrhea. Contact your veterinarian immediately.

Precautions for Parties

If you're hosting a party or overnight visitors, plan ahead to keep your pets safe and make the experience less stressful for everyone.

- **Visitors can upset your pets.** Some pets are shy or excitable around new people or in crowds, and Thanksgiving often means many visitors at once and higher-than-usual noise and activity levels. If you know your dog or cat is nervous when people visit your home, put him/her in another room or a crate with a favorite toy. This will reduce the emotional stress on your pet and protect your guests from possible injury. If your pet is particularly upset by houseguests, talk to your veterinarian about possible solutions to this common problem.

[Learn about dog bite prevention.](#)

- **If any of your guests have compromised immune systems** (due to pregnancy, some diseases, or medications or treatments that suppress the immune system), make sure they're aware of the pets (especially exotic pets) in your home so they can take extra precautions to protect themselves.
- **If you have exotic pets**, remember that some people are uncomfortable around them and that these pets may be more easily stressed by the festivities. Keep exotic pets safely away from the hubbub of the holiday.
- **Watch the exits.** Even if your pets are comfortable around guests, make sure you watch them closely, especially when people are entering or leaving your home. While you're welcoming hungry guests and collecting coats, a four-legged family member may make a break for it out the door and become lost.
- **Identification tags and microchips reunite families.** Make sure your pet has proper identification with your current contact information – particularly a microchip with up-to-date, registered information. That way, if they do sneak out, they're more likely to be returned to you. If your pet isn't already microchipped, talk to your veterinarian about the benefits of this simple procedure.

[Learn more about microchips.](#)

- **Watch your pets around festive decorations.** Special holiday displays or candles are attractive to pets as well as people. Never leave a pet alone in an area with a lit candle; it could result in a fire. And pine cones, needles and other decorations can cause intestinal blockages or even perforate an animal's intestine if eaten