

# ASK OUR VETERINARIANS

**Dear Dr. Schmidt,**

**Is there a safe way to pet proof my house for Christmas?**

Nikkie

Dear Nikkie,

That's a very common and good question that I get a lot at this time of year.

Start with the simple things. For example, if you have a new puppy or kitten, you may need to keep all the ornaments off of the lower branches of your Christmas tree. You may even want to use a small tree this year and put it up on a table out of reach of your pets, or keep it in a room your pets can't access. And you definitely want to eliminate tinsel. This is very attractive to pets; they like to eat it and it may get stuck in their bellies. Ribbon, yarn and string can be just as dangerous. Another potential hazard for the pets is the garbage can. During the holidays, there are a lot of family gatherings with large meals. Make sure your pets do not have access to the garbage or leftovers. Bones can get lodged in their mouths and intestines, and any fatty food they're not used to can cause severe intestinal upsets and even pancreatitis, even if it's just a small amount given as a treat. Sharp objects like cans can cut a pet's face or tongue and require an emergency trip to the vet. Another hazard is potential toxins. Holiday plants such as mistletoe and amaryllis bulbs can be toxic. By the way, poinsettia plants are NOT toxic to pets. They are very bitter when bitten or ingested, so mild vomiting is probably the worst thing that will happen if eaten in a large quantity. Last but not least, beware of chocolate toxicity. This can be fatal to dogs if they eat large quantities of the good stuff. Prevention is the best cure for any of these holiday maladies.

**Have a Merry Christmas.**

**Dr. Doug**



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