

Protecting Your Pets this Holiday Season

Sourced from an article by Pam Wilson, RVT, MEd, MCHES, Texas Department of State Health Services, Zoonosis Control, with assistance from Dr. John C. Haliburton, former Head of Diagnostic Toxicology for the Texas A&M Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory in Amarillo

If you change your own **antifreeze**, you already know that it shouldn't be released into the sewage or stormwater systems, but it should also never be left standing – even for a few moments. Animals are attracted to its sweet taste, and antifreeze contains ethylene glycol – a chemical that can cause lethal kidney failure and accumulation of acid in the body, even in small amounts. Some **snow globes** contain this toxin as well and should also be kept out of reach from your pets. Antifreeze with propylene glycol as the active ingredient does not cause kidney damage, but can still cause illness or death. An antidote is available, and a veterinarian should be consulted immediately.

Dogs, in particular, are attracted to sweets like **chocolate**. The extent of toxicity an animal exhibits after consuming chocolate varies based on the amount and type of chocolate, the size of the animal, and the animal's individual sensitivity. For example, baking chocolate contains a higher concentration of the stimulant theobromine than semi-sweet or milk chocolate. Symptoms of having ingested chocolate may include excessive excitability, restlessness, increased heart rate, muscle tremors, vomiting, and diarrhea. There is no specific antidote for chocolate toxicity, but a veterinarian should be consulted.

Xylitol is an artificial sweetener in **sugar-free products** that can be toxic or fatal to dogs by causing liver failure or hypoglycemia. If you suspect that your dog has eaten a product containing xylitol, a veterinarian should be consulted immediately. Some clinical signs include weakness, lethargy, vomiting, diarrhea, muscle tremors, seizures, anemia, increased thirst or urination, and bloody or tarry feces. There have been indications that ferrets may react to xylitol in the same way.

The berry is the most toxic part of a **mistletoe** plant and can cause gastrointestinal and neurological signs (including convulsions), especially if it is chewed rather than swallowed whole. Animals tend to be attracted to **poinsettias**, and even though recent findings indicate that they contain no toxic chemicals, animals still sometimes experience diarrhea and vomiting after eating them, so it is a good practice to keep these plants out of their reach. Although **ivy plants** and **Christmas cactus** are not acutely toxic, they can also cause gastrointestinal upset if ingested.

Cats, in particular, are attracted to shiny decorations like **tinsel**, which, if ingested, can cause an intestinal blockage or prolapse. Owners of indoor cats should also consider using shatterproof **ornaments** or placing breakable ones near the top of the tree.

Glow-in-the-dark jewelry contains a small amount of dibutyl phthalate, a chemical that has the potential to cause death via respiratory paralysis. Cats that have bitten into the jewelry may exhibit heavy salivation, hyperactivity, and aggressive behavior, but they typically recover within minutes. Immediately after ingestion, it helps to feed the cat small quantities of milk, canned food, or tuna juice to dilute the chemical in its mouth. Wash off any drops of the chemical that might be on the cat's coat and flush the cat's eyes with water if there has been ocular exposure. There is no known antidote for dibutyl phthalate. Usually cats will not ingest a large amount because of the unpleasant taste; however, those that have ingested large quantities should be closely monitored.

Animals in Texas are not acclimated to **winter weather**, and must be protected. Pets should not be left in an area where the ambient temperature is below 50°F, especially those that are sick, aged, or young. Keep them warm and safe by providing a safe heating source and additional bedding; and always provide adequate protection from wind, rain, or snow.

If you know or suspect that an animal has ingested any of the above items, immediately consult a veterinarian, an animal emergency clinic, or:

NATIONAL POISON CONTROL

1-800-222-1222

ASPCA ANIMAL POISON CONTROL

1-800-548-2423

To report stray or loose animals or another non-emergency incident in the City of Kennedale, call 817-478-5416.

www.cityofkennedale.com/pets