



## Alabama Veterinary Medical Association

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*Protecting People, Pets and Livestock - Yesterday, Today and Always.*

## PRESS RELEASE

### Keep Pets Safe During the Holidays

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#### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**MONTGOMERY, Ala.** - The Alabama Veterinary Medical Association wants to encourage pet owners to be mindful of pet safety during the holidays. Many foods, decorations and household items can be dangerous to pets this time of year. The last thing any pet owner wants to do on Christmas is rush their pet to the animal emergency room! But, the truth is that many pets are injured or poisoned during the holiday season.

During the holidays, most animal related ER visits are due to eating something inappropriate. Some foods cause upset stomachs, some are poisonous, and some can cause life-threatening obstructions. We know that 60% of us will share our holiday meal with our pets, but you should follow a few basic guidelines. How can you make sure your holiday doesn't end in disaster? Below are a few tips to help keep them safe:

- 1) A small amount of white turkey meat is an acceptable treat but definitely avoid the turkey skin and the turkey bones! The skin is often fatty and can cause pets to develop pancreatitis, a painful inflammation of the pet's pancreas, which can cause death fairly quickly. The fat is thought to trigger the disease. Pet owners first notice their pets are just not normal, then they may seem to have a painful abdomen that gets worse as they become ill. Vomiting is the hallmark symptom. Even though symptoms range from mild to life-threatening, acute pancreatitis is a very painful condition. These pets will whine or cry, and often walk with a "hunched up" appearance; a sure sign of pain and that veterinary care is needed immediately! Dehydration, heart arrhythmias or blood clotting issues may occur without quick medical attention.
- 2) Poultry bones, especially cooked, have potential to both break off and cause a perforation of the digestive tract or, if large amounts are consumed, could cause an obstruction.
- 3) Other foods to avoid include: grapes and raisins, excessively salty foods, onions, garlic, foods flavored with onion or garlic powder, desserts and sweets containing Xylitol, and chocolates. Baker's chocolate is EXTREMELY dangerous for pets!
- 4) All leftovers should be secured behind a pet-proof door.
- 5) Remember, keep your trash can secure. Many items used in the meal preparation and then thrown away can be dangerous. A turkey string, foil wrappers, etc may smell like food and be eaten by a curious pet.
- 6) Decorative plants are also a source of danger. Mistletoe and holly can cause vomiting and lilies are often deadly to cats. Poinsettias, despite their reputation, are not deadly and often cause little more than mild stomach upset.
- 7) Some holiday decorations are also dangerous. Ribbons and tinsel are especially attractive and hazardous to cats. Keep an eye on electrical cords to insure puppies and kittens don't chew on them.
- 8) During family gatherings, it might be best to keep pets confined if they are overly anxious. Also, monitor people going in and out of the front door. Pets might take advantage and try to escape.
- 9) Keep your veterinarian's phone number and the local animal emergency hospital handy. A quick call to either of them can give you life-saving advice or even help you avoid a trip to the ER.
- 10) Additionally, always remember that giving a pet as a Christmas present involves research, preparation and commitment. Pets require a lot of attention, and the adjustment to a new home is difficult for some animals during the holidays with all of the activity. It may cause things to get off to a bad start. Remember, pets aren't gifts, they are life-time commitments that require daily attention and care. They are a responsibility - not a toy, so be sure you are ready before you make that commitment. If you are considering gifting a pet, you should discuss it with the new owner to be sure they are ready to take on that responsibility. Lastly, please consider a shelter pet, there are many wonderful pets in shelters that need loving forever homes.

Founded in 1907, The Alabama Veterinary Medical Association is comprised of approximately 725 veterinarians from around the state, all committed to protecting people, pets and livestock – yesterday, today and always.

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Be familiar with poisonous items by checking the list at [www.petpoisonhelpline.com](http://www.petpoisonhelpline.com).