

## Top 10 Holiday Tips

Dr. James Cook, president of the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), said he has a very unhappy holiday tradition — treating pets that have become sick because of holiday excesses.

“From Thanksgiving through Christmas and into the New Year, we’ll see it every year at my practice, and unfortunately some of them can’t be saved,” Dr. Cook explains. “Owners want to involve their pets in holiday celebrations, but people need to focus on keeping their pets healthy. That’s the best gift.”

### Here are the AVMA’s top 10 holiday health tips:

- **Keep table scraps out of your pet’s diet.** “Salty, spicy and greasy” can be deadly for pets, Dr. Cook explains. Fatty foods can cause pancreatitis, a life-threatening condition in dogs, and chicken bones can splinter inside an animal’s stomach. Make sure your dog can’t get leftovers from the trash.
- **Chocolate should be out of reach of dogs** because it’s poisonous to them. The darker the chocolate, the more dangerous — with baker’s chocolate being the most deadly.
- **Avoid sweets.** A study reported in a veterinary medical journal in 2006 linked xylitol — a common sweetener in baked goods, candy and chewing gum — with liver failure and death in dogs.
- **Give your pet healthy holiday snacks.** Recipes are available on the Internet, or you can visit a pet store/bakery. Ask your veterinarian about healthy treats.
- **Anchor your holiday tree.** It’s a temptation for pets, and if it topples, it can cause severe injuries. Keep pets away from the tree water, as tree preservatives and sap can cause gastrointestinal problems.
- **Never leave a pet alone with a lit candle** or exposed flame, and be wary of exposed extension cords.
- **Don’t let pets dine on holiday plants.** Poinsettia, holly, cedar, balsam, pine and mistletoe are poisonous.
- **Be careful about ornaments.** Cats sometimes consume tinsel and other small decorations that can block the intestines.
- **Don’t go off to a holiday party** and leave your pet with access to table scraps or anything that might be dangerous. If your dog becomes sick while you’re away, it could be a tragic holiday.
- **Finally, don’t give a pet as a holiday gift.** Giving up an inappropriate new pet in January can be heartbreaking.



For more information, visit the AVMA website at [www.avma.org](http://www.avma.org).