

# Pet Holiday Hazards

Holidays are a time that we enjoy ourselves and forget that they can be a hazard to our pets. In some cases they can be life threatening. By taking a few precautions we can make the holidays safer for our pets and less stressful for ourselves.

More dogs are lost on **July 4<sup>th</sup>** every year than any other day. Firecrackers are the cause! Most animals are afraid of loud noises. For this reason it is imperative that on July 4<sup>th</sup> your pet be in a fenced yard or on a hand held leash and you should be with him. That means watching him-not visiting with the neighbor. When fireworks spook an animal he may tug the leash out of your hand or jump over the fence because he is frightened. If you are not paying attention, he will be gone! You may want to consider taking him out to relieve himself early in the evening and then again after your local fireworks display to protect him and to save yourself a lot of grief and heartache. You will still need to be alert for the small firecrackers that the neighborhood kids are shooting off.

**Halloween** means candy, groups of strange people in costume, and the door opening and closing on a regular basis for several hours. If your animal is uncomfortable consider crating or gating in a room away from the door and the activity during trick or treat hours. All of the strange costumes may confuse or frighten your animal. That coupled with the multitude of opportunities to run out the door could make Halloween a scary night for you.

**Christmas** presents other dangers. First is the Christmas tree. Remember that your greyhound is a dog! He may be "Mr. Perfect" but all of the shiny things on the tree may be just too tempting. Eating ornaments, destroying presents, or urinating on the tree can at the very least cause you some distress but at the worst can mean an expensive vet bill or loss of your pet. Both glass and wooden ornaments can cause your pet a great degree of harm if eaten, and don't forget about the tinsel.

Please don't assume you must give up your tree, but decorate wisely. Place the more expensive, nicer, glass or keepsake ornaments out of reach. (Remember, if your pet is a greyhound that may mean putting the nicer things on the top half of the tree, he's pretty tall.) During the time that your tree is up seriously consider crating your pet or gating off the tree when you are not at home. Keep in mind the age and activity level of your pet when decorating. A 2 year old may be much more curious than your 11 year old couch potato (but don't write off your old guy as safe either).

Second are all of the goodies. Please remember that your greyhound wants those treats as much as you do and he may help himself when you aren't looking if you are not inclined to share. Chocolate, raw dough, and fatty foods like gravy and leftover meat can make your pet very sick or kill him. Keep those items well out of reach when you are not using them and be aware of your animals when you are. Chocolate is toxic to dogs. Raw dough is more so. If your pet eats raw dough, the heat in his stomach causes the dough to rise. The expansion causes bloat and fermentation of the yeast causes alcohol toxicity.

Third, wrapping paper and ribbons can be hazardous. Your pet may eat them or get them tangled around his neck.

As for **other holidays**, please be vigilant. Any time there is a large group of unfamiliar people at your home you run extra risks for your pet. People that are not used to dogs may not be as careful about making sure that your doors and gates are closed behind them. They may also have a tendency to feed your pet all of the things that you carefully avoid, especially if there are children. To compound the problem, there are multiple people sneaking your pet table scraps at picnics and parties.

Holidays and parties will also produce stress and excitement in your pet. If there are groups of people visiting we recommend that you provide a place where your pet can hide from the unfamiliar faces (and hands in the case of children) until the festivities have ended. You may want to crate him or make him comfortable in another room before the party begins if he is particularly shy.