

Text for Tuesday 21st December 2004

By Nick Horniman

Pets Barn Animal Hospitals, Gloucestershire

The festive season is now upon us and although the frivolity and fun goes over many of our pet's heads, the dangers of Christmas can be more accessible to them.

Your tree may look great with presents nestling around the bottom, but how many beautifully wrapped gifts contain chocolates, biscuits or good food to eat? A rare treat for your dog in a quiet moment. Last year, we saw many dogs suffering sickness from eating too many goodies (often paper and all) from under the Christmas tree. It is not a nice way for your canine friend to spend Christmas and can be quite dangerous too if paper or decorative ribbon gets caught in their intestines. Dogs are particularly at risk from eating chocolate so put those chocolates away safely, or eat them all yourselves!

In the kitchen be wary of leaving your turkey carcass available to cats and dogs. Cooked poultry bones easily spilt and splinter and can cause obstructions in the throat or worse. A couple of years ago boxer puppy was admitted in an emergency with a turkey bone that had passed through his cheek and was sticking out under his nose. Surgery removed the bone and the dog was fine after treatment, but it added a new dimension to pulling the wish bone.

Pulling a cracker at Christmas is always fun, but beware the noise may frighten more timid animals and the small trinkets are easily eaten by nosy kittens or puppies. If your pet is of a nervous temperament and you have family and friends visiting it is a good idea to shut them away in a quiet room until the festivities are over and the fun has died down.

Cats are especially drawn to the Christmas tree as they adore those sparkly baubles and bits of tinsel. Apart from the fact that climbing cats could bring down your Christmas tree, the tinsel and ribbons are great play things and often eaten by cats during play. They may get some of the longer pieces stuck around their necks or paws before going outside which could get caught and cause problems.

One cat we once treated was addicted to the popcorn hung on the Christmas tree and had eaten it string and all. He required surgery to remove all the string.

Finally don't forget to make sure any berries from the holly or mistletoe are swept up, both are poisonous to animals (and children) and need to be cleared away to keep your pet safe and kissable under the mistletoe!

Everyone at Pets Barn wishes you all a pet safe Christmas and hope you enjoy the festive season with your families and pets.

Merry Christmas!

Pets Barn Longhope at Harts Barn Farm 01452 830086

Pets Barn Animal Hospital at Hartpury College 01452 700086

Pets Barn Forest of Dean in Heywood Road, Cinderford 01594 826688

For Emergency Treatment contact Pets Barn 24 hrs 01452 830421