



Holiday Pet Safety Guide

2026 edition • Practical tips for dogs & cats

Keep pets safe during food, guests, travel & decorations

Simple checklists you can screenshot, print, or share.

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Featuring Cupid





Holiday Foods to Avoid

Rich holiday foods send thousands of pets to emergency rooms every year. Keep these off counters, coffee tables, and trash.

- Chocolate (especially dark or baking chocolate)
- Xylitol (also called "birch sugar") in gum, candy, baked goods, some peanut butters
- Grapes and raisins
- Onions, garlic, chives (raw or cooked, including powders)
- Alcohol and raw bread dough/yeast
- Cooked bones, corn cobs, toothpicks/skewers
- Fatty scraps, gravy, skin (pancreatitis risk)
- Macadamia nuts, caffeine/energy drinks

Safer snack swaps (small amounts)

Plain cooked turkey/chicken (no skin/seasoning), green beans, carrots, plain sweet potato, plain pumpkin (not pie filling), small apple slices (no seeds).

If in doubt: don't share.

If your pet gets into holiday food

- Call your veterinarian or a 24/7 ER right away for chocolate, xylitol, grapes/raisins, or alcohol.
- Do not induce vomiting unless a vet tells you to (some substances can cause worse damage).
- Bring the package/ingredient label and estimate how much was eaten.
- Watch for vomiting, diarrhea, lethargy, tremors, drooling, or collapse — these are emergency signs.



Decorations, Plants & Party Hazards

- Tinsel, ribbon, string, garlands: can cause intestinal blockage.
- Glass ornaments and metal hooks at pet level: can cut mouths and paws.
- Candles, fireplaces, space heaters: burns and house-fire risk if bumped.
- Cords: hide or cover; unplug when unattended if your pet chews.
- Batteries, potpourri, snow globes: toxic if punctured or swallowed.
- Antifreeze and ice melt: store locked; wipe paws after walks to prevent licking.

Holiday plants (especially important for cats)

- Lilies: extremely toxic to cats — even pollen or vase water can be life-threatening.
- Mistletoe, holly, poinsettia: can cause GI upset; keep out of reach and call a vet if chewed.

Guest-proofing: the #1 lost-pet season plan

- Leash or crate your pet before opening the door. Use a baby-gate "airlock" if possible.
- Set up a quiet room: bed/blanket, water, litter box (cats), and white noise.
- Tell guests: no feeding, no chasing, no hugging nervous pets.
- If your pet is stressed (panting, hiding, growling), increase distance and use the safe zone.



Travel, Winter & Emergency Plan

Travel safety

- Use a crash-tested harness or secured crate in the car.
- Pack water, bowls, meds, poop bags, towels, and a familiar blanket.
- Never leave pets in a parked car — winter temps swing quickly.

Cold-weather basics

- Limit time outside for small dogs, seniors, and short-haired pets; consider a sweater.
- Wipe paws after walks to remove ice melt/chemicals; prevent licking.
- Keep space heaters guarded; secure cords; store antifreeze locked up.

New Year's noise & fireworks

- Keep pets indoors well before sunset; close windows and curtains; use TV/white noise.
- ID is non-negotiable: collar tag + microchip with current contact info.
- If your pet panics, talk to your vet ahead of time about anxiety medication options.

Emergency kit (save this)

- Vet + 24/7 ER phone numbers
- ASPCA Animal Poison Control: (888) 426-4435
- Gauze, vet wrap, pet-safe antiseptic, tweezers, saline eye rinse
- Current pet photo + medication list

CUPID'S QUICK TIPS

- No people-food freebies
- Door leash every time
- Strings & tinsel = hard no
- ID tag + microchip updated



Holiday Pet Safety Checklist

Run this list before every gathering (and screenshot this page).

Food & trash

- No chocolate, xylitol, grapes/raisins, onions/garlic within reach
- Trash secured (lid or garage) after meals and parties
- Cooked bones, corn cobs, toothpicks, skewers put away
- Guests reminded: no table scraps and no sharing desserts
- Know emergency signs: repeated vomiting, tremors, collapse, severe lethargy

Decorations & plants

- No tinsel, ribbon, string, or ornament hooks at pet height
- Tree anchored; breakables moved higher
- Cords covered or secured (no chewing access)
- Candles/fireplaces supervised; wax melts kept out of reach
- Toxic plants avoided (especially lilies for cats)

Doors & guests

- Leash or crate before opening the front door
- Quiet room set up with water, bed, and litter box (cats)
- ID tags on and microchip info current
- Guests told: don't feed, chase, or corner pets

Travel safety

- Crash-tested harness or secured crate in the car
- Water, bowls, meds, and cleanup bags packed
- Never leave pets in a parked car (even in winter)
- Take breaks on road trips; keep pets on leash at stops

Winter basics

- Outdoor time limited for seniors/small pets; warm bedding ready
- Wipe paws after walks to remove ice melt/chemicals
- Antifreeze and cleaners locked up
- Heater cords protected; no burns or chewing risks

Noise & fireworks

- Pets indoors well before dark on fireworks nights
- Windows closed; TV/white noise on
- Safe space ready (crate/quiet room)
- Talk to your vet ahead of time if your pet panics

Emergency plan

- Vet + 24/7 ER numbers saved in your phone
- ASPCA Animal Poison Control: (888) 426-4435
- Pet first-aid kit stocked (gauze, vet wrap, saline, tweezers)
- Recent pet photo + medication list accessible

Tip: If you can check every box, you're in great shape.