

THE PET CONNECTION

By Deb Waldron

Have A Jolly Christmas – Keep Those Pets Away From The Holly!

- Mistletoe, especially mistletoe berries, can be very toxic to cats and dogs.
- Holly leaves and berries can cause gastrointestinal irritation, vomiting and diarrhea; however, animals rarely swallow many leaves because the tough, pointed leaves are difficult to chew.
- Greens such as balsam and pine, while not strictly toxic, also can cause minor irritation for munching pets.
- The long-time fear of poinsettia plants can be traced to reports of a poinsettia variety that is native to Hawaii; most poinsettia varieties that are sold at holiday time are less toxic, and at worst will cause irritation of the mouth, excess salivation and perhaps vomiting. But some of the increasingly popular potted bulbs in the lily family can cause kidney failure in cats.
- Tinsel has no direct toxic effects, but it can cause gastrointestinal blockage that can be life-threatening. Cats seem to love tinsel.
- Styrofoam in ornaments or packaging presents the same threat of gastrointestinal blockage. And bubble lights contain methylene chloride, a moderately toxic solvent.
- Chocolate, especially semisweet "bakers" chocolate, which contains much higher levels of caffeine and theobromine than does milk chocolate, can cause seizures or heart failure, and can be fatal. Too much milk chocolate -- with its high-fat content -- can lead to pancreatitis in pets.

PAWS FOR REFLECTION

“Cats are smarter than dogs, you can't get eight cats to pull a sled through the snow.” - Jeff Valdez