

# Ask A Vet: Doggies are Holiday Hogs

*Sunday, November 9, 2014*

Dear Dr. Weldy's,

My family always has a big holiday celebration every year (Thanksgiving & Christmas). We haven't had a dog before this year, and I was wondering if we should be concerned with any of the normal holiday fare?

-Festive Family

Dear Festive,

This is a very fun time of the year and exciting to have a dog for the holidays! There are several things to be aware of during the holidays.

First, there is always food around this time of year. Be careful with leaving chocolate and other sweets out with easy access. Milk chocolate can cause vomiting, diarrhea, and nervousness. Baking chocolate can cause severe illness or even death. Many holiday foods contain raisins which can be highly toxic to dogs. Raisins can cause signs from mild vomiting to life-threatening kidney failure. Typically, for the main holiday meals, turkey, ham, or other meats are served. While these can be ingredients in your dog's food, feeding these foods to them is not the same thing. Hams, roasts, or other foods higher in fat can cause pancreatitis. This can lead to severe abdominal pain, excessive vomiting and diarrhea, severe dehydration, and can be costly and drawn out to treat. Turkey or other poultry that is served during this time of year can pose a risk to your dog when it comes to the bones. Cooked poultry bones easily splinter and can become lodged in your dog's throat or stomach, and can even cut a hole through the intestines requiring emergency surgery. When it comes to foods during the holidays, it is important to realize that your pet is not used to having those foods. Giving them tastes of these foods can have severe consequences.

Decorations and presents can cause issues as well. Unfortunately, it's not uncommon for dogs and cats to play with light strands and die from electrocution. Keeping them out of reach, or using cord guards are good ways to protect your pets from chewing these wires. When it comes to presents, keep in mind that your dog has a very powerful nose to smell what is inside packages and can easily tear through paper can cardboard. If you are wrapping anything food related or potentially toxic, then I suggest keeping that present in a safe location until Christmas morning. Additionally, strings and ribbons, if eaten can cause major problems. Frequently, those items loop around the tongue and can either cut part of the tongue or hang into the throat and cause severe vomiting. These strings and ribbons can also cause blockages within the intestines, requiring surgery to remove.

The holidays are the most wonderful time of the year for your whole family. When it comes to including your pet in these events, I think it's important to use common sense. Do not trust your dog with any of these changes if you wouldn't leave a toddler alone in the room.

-Dr. Jason Heitzman