Christmas plants

The following are generally considered to be of **low toxicity** and may cause mild tummy upset:

- Poinsettia (*Euphorbia pulcherrima*)
- Holly (*Ilex* species)
- Be careful your dog does not have access to chocolate advent calanders
- Mistletoe (*Viscum album*)
- Christmas trees
- Ivy (*Hedera* species)
- Christmas cactus (*Schlumbergera* species)

LILIES (LILIUM SPECIES)

They can cause kidney failure in cats. Contact your vet immediately if your cat has been exposed to lilies, even if it is only the pollen.

General advice

- Do not hang any chocolate decorations on the tree.
- Do not leave any presents that may contain chocolate or other edible goodies under the tree.
- Do not leave alcoholic drinks unattended.
- Do not leave food lying around.
- Dispose of leftovers promptly and safely.
- If baking, try to prevent access to any cakes, biscuits or mince pies that are cooling. Once cool, store securely.

What to do if you think your pet has been poisoned

EMERGENCY ADVICE

- **Call Animal PoisonLine on 01202 509000 even if your pet is showing no signs to find out whether a trip to the vet is required.**
- **Remove your pet from the source of poison.**
- **Do not try to make your pet vomit – NEVER give salt water.**
- **Collect the poison and take a sample/ container with you if you are advised to take your pet to the vet practice.**

Animal POISONLine 24hr advice for owners
01202 509000

www.animalpoisonline.co.uk
24 hours a day (charges apply)

VETERINARY POISONS INFORMATION SERVICE

Animal PoisonLine is run by the VPIS, the UK's only animal poison centre, which has provided advice to vets on the management of poisoning in animals for over 25 years.

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CHRISTMAS HAZARDS

Overview

Christmas can be a busy and chaotic time with large quantities of food and presents left unattended.

Curious pets, particularly dogs, may investigate and eat gifts (including edible or inedible ones) left under the tree, food in the kitchen or chew on plants decorating the house.

Toxic foods

CHOCOLATE

Chocolate contains a chemical that dogs do not tolerate well. White chocolate generally does not represent a risk but milk chocolate and even a relatively small amount of dark chocolate can cause agitation, excitability, tremors, convulsions and problems with the heart.

GRAPES AND THEIR DRIED FRUITS (SULTANAS, RAISINS, CURRANTS)

Grapes and their dried products (currants, sultanas and raisins) are toxic to dogs. Ingestion of even a small quantity can cause severe kidney damage. This will also include food items that contain dried fruits such as Christmas pudding, Christmas cake and mince pies.

ALCOHOL

Dogs may help themselves to any alcohol left unattended including wine and liqueurs and it can cause similar signs in them as it does in their owners when drunk in excess. Dogs can become wobbly and drowsy and in severe cases there is a risk of low body temperature, low blood sugar and coma.

ONIONS, LEEKS AND GARLIC (INCLUDING SAGE AND ONION STUFFING, ONION GRAVY)

Onions, garlic, leeks, shallots and chives all belong to the same group of plants. They can cause toxicity even when cooked. Initially there can be gastrointestinal signs with vomiting and diarrhoea but the main effect is damage to red blood cells resulting in anaemia. This may not be apparent until several days after ingestion.

NUTS

Macadamia nuts can cause lethargy, increased body temperature, tremor, lameness and stiffness in dogs. Chocolate-coated macadamia nuts may also cause chocolate poisoning. Other nuts are generally of low toxicity although they could cause gastrointestinal upset.

LEFTOVERS

Mouldy food can be hazardous due the presence of toxic substances produced by the mould. Ingestion of mouldy food, such as bread and dairy products, can cause vomiting, tremors, a high body temperature and convulsions.

Christmas gifts

Silica gel, the little sachets in the boxes of leather or electronic goods are of low toxicity. **Wrapping and crepe paper** are not toxic and **candles** which may be received as gifts or used as decoration may cause diarrhoea if ingested.

Batteries, and particularly small button or coin cell batteries, can be a hazard if chewed or swallowed.

Pot pourri which may be received as a gift can cause significant gastrointestinal upset and pain in dogs. These effects can last several days.