



PAWS FOR PETS

Parkview Animal Hospital

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Did You Know?

Timely & informative tips from ASPCA



Poinsettias are not the deadly flowers that popular legend has made them out to be?

Poinsettias (*Euphorbia pulcherrima*) are

part of a family of plants known as spurges. During the 1820s Joel Robert Poinsett, the U.S. Ambassador to Mexico at the time, first brought poinsettias to the U.S. from a Mexican city he had visited. It was during the early part of the 20th century that the myth of the plant's toxicity began when the two-year-old child of a U.S. Army officer was alleged to have become ill and

died from consuming a poinsettia leaf.

As a result of this rumor, the toxic potential of poinsettia has become highly exaggerated. In reality, poinsettia ingestions typically produce only mild to moderate gastrointestinal tract irritation, which may include drooling, vomiting and/or diarrhea. Therefore, while keeping this plant out of the reach of your pet to avoid stomach upset is still a good idea, pet owners need not fear the poinsettia and banish it from their homes for fear of a fatal exposure.

Mushrooms

Certain species of mushrooms are considered to be relatively non-toxic, while other species can be very toxic. Of the toxic species, some can potentially cause liver or kidney damage, while others may produce severe gastrointestinal or even neurological effects. Toxic mushrooms can often be found growing right alongside non-toxic ones. Because of this, identifying each type of mushroom existing on your property can be very difficult. The ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center advises keeping all wild mushrooms out of the reach of pets, and recommends that all wild mushroom ingestions should be treated very se-



riously. If accidental exposures to wild mushrooms occur, seek immediate veterinary assistance by contacting your local veterinarian or the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center.



K-State Veterinarian Offers Tips for Keeping Cats From Attacking The Christmas Tree



MANHATTAN -- If you own a cat, and see Christmas tree decorations flying around the room, you may realize Morris has terrorized the tannenbaum yet again.

And if you're tired of Morris' reign of terror on your Christmas tree, a Kansas State University veterinarian has several suggestions.

A cat's classic curiosity is the main cause of his mischief, according to Dr. Kathy Gaughan.

"Most cats get into the tree because it's new and interesting," Gaughan said. "Introducing a new toy or game at the same time might help keep the cat occupied with something else."

If this idea doesn't work, Gaughan suggests taking a more active - and noisy - approach.

"Try booby trapping the tree a few days before you decorate it," she said. "Stack a bunch of empty soda cans and either wait for the cat to go up the tree and rig them to have them fall, or set them up in the tree so if the cat jiggles the tree they'll fall. You can even put coins in the cans to make more noise."

A motion detector with an alarm that will sound when the cat is near the tree is another option to steer the cat away. Gaughan also offers a less noisy suggestion.

"Citrus or citronella sprays can be applied around the bottom of the tree. It can be fairly effective without an objectionable odor," she said.

Merging pets and holidays doesn't have to be a holiday nightmare, it just takes some patience and common sense. Gaughan offers tips for keeping your pets safe during the holiday season.

Decorations:

Tinsel not only has sharp edges that can cause intestinal problems, it's also harder for the animal to digest and pass.

"Place glass and valuable ornaments high on the tree and make sure you pick up after decorating, especially making sure no hooks remain on the ground," Gaughan said. Some wrapping paper may contain lead, so pets shouldn't eat it. Electric cords and pets are not a good combination. Protect them both by covering up the cords or taping them to the floor as well as providing appropriate supervision.

"Never leave a lit candle unattended, especially when there are rambunctious pets around," Gaughan said. "Be aware that animals with asthma or other respiratory problems may be particularly sensitive to burning incense or smelly candles."

Plants:

In general, it's wise to keep holiday plants out of pet's chewing reach. However, when mischief and curiosity prevail, it helps to know harmless from harmful.

While pine needles have no significant toxic effects, they can become lodged in a pet's throat, Gaughan said. Mistletoe, holly and holly berries, Christmas cactus and the Christmas rose have various toxic effects.

*Source: Dr. Kathy Gaughan, 785-532-4130, or e-mail kgaughan@k-state.edu
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Poison Proof Your Pet's Home

Did you know that many substances commonly found in and around your home can be potentially dangerous to your animal companions? Here are some items to watch out for as you poison-proof your pet's home.

Non-toxic substances for dogs and cats: Here are a few substances are considered to be non-toxic, although they may cause mild gastrointestinal upset in some animals.

- Water based paints
- Toilet bowl water
- Silica gel
- Poinsettia
- Cat litter
- Glue traps
- Glow jewelry
- Christmas tree water

Foods to Avoid Feeding to Your Pet

- Alcoholic beverages
- Avocado
- Chocolate (all forms of chocolate)
- Coffee (all forms of coffee)
- Fatty foods
- Macadamia nuts
- Moldy or spoiled foods
- Onions, onion powder
- Raisins and grapes
- Salt
- Yeast dough

Warm Weather Hazards

- Animal toxins - toads, insects, spiders, snakes and scorpions
- Blue-green algae in ponds
- Citronella candles
- Cocoa mulch
- Compost piles
- Fertilizers
- Flea products
- Outdoor plants and plant bulbs
- Swimming pool treatment supplies

Pesticide Hazards

When using herbicides or insecticides in or around your home:

- Always use pesticides in accordance with label instructions.
- Keep pets away from treated areas for the label recommended amount of time.

- Store unused products in areas that will always be inaccessible to pets.
- Be aware that fly baits containing methomyl and slug and snail baits containing metaldehyde are particularly dangerous.

Medication Precautions

- Keep all prescriptions and over-the-counter drugs out of the reach of your pets, preferably in closed cabinets.
- Remind guests to store their medications safely as well.
- Pain killers, cold medicines, anti-cancer drugs, antidepressants, vitamins, and diet pills are common examples of human medication that could be potentially lethal even in small dosages.
- One regular-strength ibuprofen tablet (200mg) can cause stomach ulcers in a 10-pound dog.

Cold Weather Hazards

- Antifreeze: If you think your pet has consumed antifreeze, contact your veterinarian right away.
- Liquid potpourris: Exposure to some types of liquid potpourris can result in severe oral, dermal and ocular damage.
- Ice melting products can be irritating to skin and mouth.
- Rat and mouse bait - place these products in areas that are inaccessible to your companion animals.

Christmas Tree Hazards

- Christmas tree water may contain fertilizers, which, if ingested, can upset the stomach. Stagnant tree water can be breeding grounds for bacteria, which can also lead to vomiting, nausea, and diarrhea, if ingested.
- Electrical cords - Avoid animal exposure to electrical cords. If they are chewed they could electrocute your pet. Cover up or hide electrical cords and never let your pet chew on them.
- Ribbons or tinsel can become lodged in the intestines and cause intestinal obstruction. This is a very common situation for kittens!
- Batteries contain corrosives, and if ingested they can cause ulceration to the mouth, tongue, and the rest of the gastrointestinal tract.
- Glass ornaments can cause internal laceration when ingested.

Can Pets Sense Pregnancy?

By Nikole Sledd

We don't have scientific proof that pets sense their owners' pregnancies, but I've seen plenty of examples of this in my ten years as an animal trainer.

Your pets probably don't understand that in nine months there will be a new baby joining your family, but dogs and cats do detect differences in your mood, posture, behavior, and body chemistry that clue them in to the enormous change you're going through.

There are other signs your dog and cat will pick up on: They're masters at reading body language, so they'll notice when your movements start to get more awkward. Pets are also highly attuned to changes in your daily routine -- say, if you're not taking your dog for runs as often as you used to, if you're spending more time on the couch, or if family members are treating you with extra care.

It's common for dogs to go on alert and become overprotective of their expecting owner from the very beginning of her pregnancy. I've worked with dogs that growled, barked, or blocked doors with their bodies to prevent other family members -- even the husband -- from coming into the same room as the mom-to-be!

Other dogs will treat their pregnant owner with more attention and care than usual. One woman I worked with had a difficult pregnancy and ended up on bedrest. Her dog refused to leave her side, and had to be forcefully pushed outside to go to the bathroom.

Because they aren't as socially involved, cats are less likely to go through these sorts of behavioral changes. But if they feel neglected, cats may become more aggressive or act out by urinating where they're not supposed to, like in your bed or laundry basket.

To help prevent problem behaviors, try to stick to your pre-pregnancy routine as much as possible. Do the best you can, and ask family members and friends to step in and help when you're not up for a run in the park or a long brushing session. I advise clients to develop a plan for caring for their pet while they're in the hospital, much as they'd develop a birth plan. Make sure to line up a caretaker for your pets and write down your pets' schedules for that person.

To help your dog understand that you still love him, be careful of the messages you send through your body language. Pregnant women often unconsciously place their hands over their stomachs, and dogs read this closed-arm posture as saying "I'm unavailable" or "step back." (Open-armed postures, on the other hand, send dogs the message to "come here.")

If your dog or cat starts seriously misbehaving during your pregnancy, or if you don't have experience preparing pets for a new baby, it's a good idea to get help from a professional trainer. Many offer "baby readiness" classes or individual training sessions to help pets adjust.

If you stay on top of any potential behavior problems, having pets during your pregnancy and afterward can be a wonderful thing for you and your baby. Studies have shown that spending time with a domesticated animal can improve mood, lessen depression, lower blood pressure, and even help you live longer. So enjoy!

Nikole Sledd received her bachelor's degree in animal science from Cornell University and has been training animals for more than ten years. She offers private training, group classes, and behavior modification programs for family pets in the San Francisco Bay Area through her Oakland, California-based company, Creature Teachers.

Antifreeze Change Can Be Dangerous for Pets

MANHATTAN -- Antifreeze may keep your car's engine purring, but it could make your cat's motor stop. William Fortney, assistant professor in Kansas State University's College of Veterinary Medicine, said that thousands of animals die each year by consuming antifreeze.

"We need to be careful and dispose of antifreeze properly for the sake of our pets and other people's pets as well," Fortney said. Ingesting even a small amount of antifreeze could be deadly for dogs and cats. According to Fortney, antifreeze violently disrupts the calcium balance in the animal's system, culminating in acute, irreversible kidney failure. The kidney failure sends the animal into uremic poisoning, possible seizures and a coma, ending in death.

The key is noticing the symptoms early. "If your pet appears disoriented, drunk or wobbly, it may be an early warning sign. As the condition progresses, the animal may vomit, seizure, appear depressed or listless," Fortney said.

If owners witness a pet consuming antifreeze, or the pet exhibits these signs, call a veterinarian immediately. "Survival depends on the amount of antifreeze ingested. The animal could live for 24 to 72 hours after ingestion," Fortney said. A

medical antidote may be administered to save the pet's life if given in time.

To prevent such a tragedy from happening, Fortney said to think of your pets when you prepare your car for the winter driving season. New, less toxic antifreezes are on the market as an option for motorists. However, when changing antifreeze or any other vital car fluid, everyone should dispose of it properly. Place all used antifreeze in a plastic container, seal it tightly and take it to an automobile service station for recycling. Be sure to store all new antifreeze containers where your pets cannot get into them. Completely clean all antifreeze spills in the garage or driveway.

Through these simple steps, drivers won't have to accidentally hurt a pet in order to start a car this winter, said Fortney.

-30-

For more information, contact Fortney at 785-532-5690