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10 Christmas hazards all pet owners should be aware of: Avoid cat-connected catastrophes and dog-related dilemmas this Christmas.

While humans indulge in a little festive frivolity, Christmas can be a dangerous time for pets, with tempting but potentially poisonous treats adorning every open surface – meaning a third of pet owners will experience an emergency this festive season.

Vets Now, the UK's out-of-hours pet emergency service, sees a 788 per cent increase in chocolate poisoning cases over Christmas Day and Boxing Day alone, and new research shows that while most dog owners (93 per cent) are aware chocolate is poisonous, 32 per cent of pets have still been at risk after eating some. And it's not just chocolate that's cause for concern: dozens of foods like macadamia nuts, grapes and raisins are also dangerous for dogs, too.

As nine in 10 poisonings happen in the owner's home, and a shocking 5.5 million dog owners unknowingly feed their pets these harmful foods at Christmas, Vets Now have put together a helpful list of hazards all owners need to be aware of, to help you avoid any animal-related accidents this festive season:

1. Chocolate

Chocolate contains a stimulant called theobromine, a bit like caffeine, which, while tasty, is severely poisonous to cats and dogs.

2. Mince Pies and Christmas Puddings

All grapes, raisins, currants and sultanas are toxic to dogs; as are foods that contain them – which means no mince pies for your pooch, we're afraid.

3. Blue Cheese

While delicious to us, blue cheese contains a substance called roquefortine C, which dogs are extremely sensitive to.

4. Tinsel

While it might look like a lot of fun to play with, tinsel can cause dangerous blockages in an animal's stomach.

5. Macadamia nuts

Often lurking in biscuits or eaten as a decadent Christmas snack, these nuts cause severe illness in dogs.

6. Garlic, chives and onion

Found in many festive foods like gravy, stuffing and sausages, all Allium species are poisonous to dogs.

7. Snow Globes

Imported versions can contain antifreeze – as little as one tablespoon can be fatal for a cat.

8. Candles

They may create a cosy atmosphere, but candle flames can burn paws and the curious noses of furry friends. There's also risk of them falling over when brushed against.

9. Fairy Lights

Cats are curious and will try to chew on anything, including fairy lights – which can burn and even electrocute them.

10. Alcohol

Alcohol can cause severe liver and brain damage in animals. As little as a tablespoon can lead to problems for your cat or dog.

Other hazards to be aware of include:

- Salt dough ornaments – the mix of flour and salt with water can cause a potentially fatal salt toxicosis.
- Christmas foliage like poinsettia, mistletoe and ivy – all of which are mildly toxic to both cats and dogs.
- Wrapping paper – eating a large amount of paper could cause an obstruction in the stomach.
- Lilies – those from the Liliaceae or Hemerocallis species are very dangerous for cats. Eating just two or three leaves, or even drinking water from a vase containing them can be potentially fatal.

If your pet has eaten anything potentially harmful, you should call your vet for advice. Many local vet practices choose to close over the Christmas period so it's essential you're aware of your local out-of-hours emergency vet.

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