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BRADSHAW VETERINARY CLINIC

Winter 2006 Newsletter

Winter Concerns

As the mercury plunges, the seasonal winter rituals begin. We break out winter clothing, weatherproof our homes, and limit our time outdoors. We also prepare for the winter holidays.

In addition to getting ourselves ready for winter, we shouldn't forget our pets. Providing a safe environment for them is also important.

Outdoor Threats

Some products made for winter can be very dangerous or even lethal to pets. Ice melts, salts and antifreeze are three commonly used products that can make pets very ill.

- Ice melts and salt, if ingested, can result in significant gastrointestinal inflammation. These products are spread on sidewalks and streets, and can get on your pet's paws. They may ingest the salt or ice melt if they lick or clean their paws. One way to prevent ingestion of salts and ice melts is to wash your pet's feet after coming indoors.
- Antifreeze poisoning is common in winter. Even a small amount of antifreeze is extremely toxic. It has a sweet taste that attracts animals, but it can cause permanent kidney damage or death. The lethal dose is 1 teaspoon per 2 pounds of body weight. Don't let animals drink from puddles, and make sure to clean paws when a pet comes in from the

outdoors.

- Don't leave your dog alone in the car while you do last-minute shopping or errands. Carbon monoxide from an engine left running is dangerous. In addition, a running car is a target for thieves. Your car can be replaced, but your pet is irreplaceable. The cold weather and winter conditions pose their own dangers:
- Prolonged exposure to cold weather, especially accompanied by high winds (the wind chill factor), can lower the body temperature. This is called hypothermia, a condition that can interfere with normal bodily functions and result in injury or death. Pets can also suffer from frostbite, which occurs when skin dies from the cold.
- Pets walking across ice-covered lakes have been known to fall through the ice and become submerged in freezing water. Drowning is likely if the pet does not get help. If pulled from the water, the animal is at risk for hypothermia if not slowly warmed.

Indoor Hazards

As the outside temperature falls, people and pets tend to spend more time indoors. Be sure your (cont. on page 2)

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Dates to Remember:

- February is National Pet Dental Health Month!! Keeping your pet's teeth healthy is a critical component of overall health. [Learn more...](#)

Winter Concerns (cont.)

home is safe.

- Certain plants are a menace to dogs and cats: Poinsettias, though not as toxic as many people think, can irritate the stomach and eyes. Berries of the Jerusalem cherry are toxic, and cause pain, vomiting and diarrhea. Holly and mistletoe, amaryllis, chrysanthemum, rhododendron and winter broom as well as Christmas berry, cherry, pepper and rose can all cause problems to pets that ingest them. Note: Liquid potpourri can cause terrible burns in an animal's mouth should it be ingested.
- Candles are a great attraction for pets, but don't leave them alone in a room with a menorah or candleabra blazing. A careless swish of a tail can be disastrous.
- Prior to using your furnace, have it evaluated for potential carbon monoxide leakage. Pets are generally in your house for longer periods than people and have a higher potential for carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Also, in the winter, house fires are more apt to occur. People often use space heaters, electric blankets and other heating products. If not carefully monitored, these items can be causes of house fires. Pets caught in a fire have the potential to be badly burned and suffer from smoke inhalation. Holidays should be a time for joy. Exercising some prudence and care can keep it that way. Here's how to keep a pet safe:

The Tree

- The natural smell of a Christmas tree attracts pets. But remember that needles (even artificial ones) are indigestible. So, keep your pet

away from the tree (using a baby gate in the doorway or low lattice fencing around the tree itself) and secure it so he can't knock it over.

- Artificial trees pose their own hazards. Small pieces of plastic or aluminum can break off and be swallowed, causing intestinal blockage or irritation to the mouth.
- Don't use preservatives in the stand water. They can be toxic if consumed by a thirsty pet. Carefully cover the top of the stand with a tree skirt so your pet can't get to it.
- Lights can get very hot — remove them from the lower branches of the tree so they won't burn.
- Tinsel is dangerous. Its sharp edges can cause cuts in the mouth. If a pet swallows a piece of tinsel, it can block intestines, causing decreased appetite, vomiting, diarrhea, listlessness and weight loss. Treatment usually involves surgery.
- Don't use edible ornaments or fragile, easily breakable glass decorations to trim the tree. Your pet may knock over the tree trying to get to them and your dog may decide they're toys and cut himself trying to play with them.
- Don't use angel hair. It's made of spun glass and can cause irritation on contact.
- Make sure electrical cords are out of reach, taped firmly to walls or floors. Chewing on wires may cause burns or pulmonary edema (fluid in the lungs), which can be fatal.
- Don't use wire ornament hooks that can easily snag an ear or a tail, or, if swallowed, can lodge in the

throat or intestines. Instead, fashion loops of yarn, ribbons or light weight twine. And be careful not to leave any of that lying around.

The Gifts

- Check out the toys your pet or kids receive as gifts. A pet can swallow small parts; plastic items can be easily broken and swallowed, too.
- Gift wrappings can be dangerous to a pet's health: String and ribbon can cause obstruction of the small bowel if swallowed.
- Before throwing away large boxes or cartons, check the insides to make sure a puppy hasn't curled up inside.

The Food

- Alcohol and chocolate are toxic. Keep drinks and sweets out of a pet's reach. Chocolate contains a substance called theobromine, and even a single ounce of pure chocolate can be lethal to a small dog. Dark and unsweetened baking chocolate are the most dangerous. Symptoms of poisoning include vomiting, diarrhea, tremors, hyperactivity and seizures.
- Turkey bones left in an accessible place are almost irresistible to pets, but they can lodge in an animal's throat or block the intestinal tract. Remove leftovers from the table and don't leave garbage where animals can get to it. Winter is a wonderful and beautiful season. The ice covered ponds, snow capped trees, children sledding and making snow angels. With a little care and precaution, pet hazards can be avoided and the winter can be thoroughly enjoyed!