

## **Holiday Small Pet Safety**

*Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff*

Pet accidents increase dramatically during the holidays. We do not mean to spoil your fun with these cautions, but hope to keep your holidays safe. If your pet spends time out of the cage, have a safe exercise area in which he can play. Some rabbit owners actually put an [exercise pen](#) around the Christmas tree, to prevent their bunny from having access to it. Keep in mind that if your small pet accidentally escapes from his cage or pen during the holidays, there are more hazards than usual.

- Prevent exposure to electrical wires, which could cause dangerous burns or electrocution. Conceal them or use pet-proof covers. Otherwise, your pet may mistake them for a chew toy.
- Prevent access to holiday plants. Never allow your pet unsupervised access to poinsettia, holly, mistletoe, or other plants commonly used to decorate during the holidays.
- A decorated tree poses many hazards. Tinsel, garland, flocking, and artificial snow can be dangerous. The tree may also be coated with potentially harmful fire retardant, fertilizer, or insecticide. Larger decorating lights can become hot and cause burns. Low hanging lights and ornaments can be especially attracting.
- Many of the foods we set out during the holidays can be unhealthy or even toxic to pets, including chocolate, sugary cookies, salty snacks, and other favorites left out for nibbling and, of course, alcoholic drinks.
- Perfumes, potpourri, adhesives, glues, and cleaning products can all be toxic.
- Open flames are dangerous. Stoves, candles, and fireplaces always pose a serious threat.
- Tape, ribbons, and the inks and metals used in some gift wraps could cause problems if eaten.
- Visitors, especially children, may not understand how to care for and handle your small pet. It is best to lay some ground rules such as who can and cannot take the pet out; what – if anything – they can feed it and how often; and when the pet should be allowed to sleep undisturbed.
- Discourage guests from bringing their dog or other pet into your home. If they do, understand that your pet and theirs are sure to be anxious. Keep them separated and do not relax your vigilance.

**We hope these tips help you and your small pet enjoy a happy, fun, and safe holiday season!**