



# MIDFOREST

*veterinary practice*

## Keeping Christmas Safe for our Pets

It is easy to see in the window of every shop that Christmas is fast approaching. As we eagerly anticipate the sights, smells (and tastes!) of the festive season, it is a particularly good time to reflect on our furry companions and some hazards that may be present at this time of year. To help with this I have compiled a list of Christmas “**Do’s and Don’ts**”

**Do decorate your home with pet friendly materials.** We all enjoy making our homes festive and beautiful to welcome in the holidays. Some of the traditional décor, however, can have devastating consequences to our feline friends. **Tinsel**, in particular, is almost irresistible to a cat when dangling off the branch of a proud evergreen. Swallowing tinsel can cause a life threatening intestinal blockage that could lead to the need for an emergency operation. **Baubles** made from breakable materials, especially glass, may shatter and lacerate feet (human or animal) when knocked off a branch by a curious pet. Using unbreakable decorations and completely avoiding any “string-like” decorations is the best way to avoid problems. Anyone with a puppy should also be certain to keep decorations only on the upper branches, or fence off the tree altogether.

**Do use extreme care if tuning up your car for winter weather.** Automobile **antifreeze** contains a chemical called ethylene glycol, which tastes sweet to our pets, but is extremely toxic, leading to kidney failure and death in a short amount of time. Please always wipe up any spills, no matter how small, and keep containers in a safe secure area with lids tightly in place. If you suspect your pet may have ingested some antifreeze in any form, please contact your vet right away.

And now a few Don’ts...

**Don’t give in to those pleading eyes and share your Christmas goodies with your dog or cat.** Chocolate, while delicious and safe for us, contains a chemical called theobromine which in high enough doses can be toxic to our pets. This chemical is particularly high in dark chocolate, or baker’s chocolate, but even milk chocolate eaten in large enough amounts can result in illness. It is a good idea to avoid giving your pets any extra titbits, especially helpings of turkey and gravy or other high-calorie, high-fat treats. While overindulgence is one of the main ways we enjoy Christmas, our pets can suffer from some serious stomach upsets, anything from diarrhoea to more serious problems such

as an inflamed pancreas that could cause severe pain and long stays in hospital. Therefore, it is best to keep our pets on their regular feeding regime, and give them extra attention rather than extra food as their Christmas present.

**Don't, no matter how nice an idea it may seem at the time, give pets for Christmas.**

The idea of a kitten or puppy or hamster under the tree is an endearing one in principle, however in practice this can be a very stressful time for an animal to enter a household, and too many pets are given up after the novelty of a new animal wears off. Instead, consider placing a wrapped collar or box of treats under the tree, with a promise to pick out a new pet in the new year when full attention can be devoted to the new arrival.

**And finally...**

Do have a very merry Christmas and wonderful new year with all your family and furry friends from all of us at Midforest Vets.

Colleen Bray BSc DVM MRCVS is a veterinary surgeon at Midforest Veterinary Practice in Lyndhurst, and is thrilled to be providing veterinary services for the New Forest community. She is Canadian, and trained at the Ontario Veterinary College in Guelph, Ontario. She is married, and currently owned by her Cavalier King Charles Spaniel, three cats, the practice ferret and a Haflinger pony.