



## THE ASPCA ANIMAL POISON CONTROL CENTER OFFERS PET POISON SAFETY TIPS FOR THE HOLIDAY SEASON



**(Urbana, IL) November 15, 2004** – The holidays are a time to eat, drink, decorate and share good times with friends and family. However, the same treats and trimmings considered harmless for humans can be hazardous to your pet's health. The ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center is offering pet owners some helpful hints to keep their pets happy and healthy during the holiday season.

Holiday sweets with chocolate are not for pets. Depending on the dose ingested, chocolate (bakers, semi sweet, milk and dark) can be potentially poisonous to many animals. In general, the less sweet the chocolate, the more toxic it could be. In fact, unsweetened baking chocolate contains almost seven times more theobromine as milk chocolate. Vomiting, diarrhea, seizures, hyperactivity and increased thirst, urination and heart rate can be seen with the ingestion of as little as 1/4 ounce of baking chocolate by a 10-pound dog.

Keep your pet on its normal diet. Any change of diet, even for one meal, may give your dog or cat severe indigestion and diarrhea. This is particularly true for older animals that have more delicate digestive systems and nutritional requirements.

Boiled or grilled meats and fresh vegetables can be offered as a healthy alternative.

Don't give pets holiday leftovers and keep pets out of the garbage. Poultry bones can splinter and cause blockages. Greasy, spicy and fatty for spoiled foods can cause stomach upset; spoiled or and moldy foods could cause food poisoning signs, tremors or seizures.

Alcohol and pets do NOT mix.

Place unattended alcoholic drinks where pets cannot reach them. If ingested, the animal could become very sick and weak and may go into a coma, possibly resulting in death from respiratory failure.

Keep aluminum foil and cellophane candy wrappers away from pets. They can cause vomiting and intestinal blockage.

Be careful with holiday floral arrangements. Lilies are commonly used and many all varieties, including Tiger, Asian, Japanese Show, Stargazer and Casa Blanca can cause kidney failure in cats. Safe alternatives can include artificial flowers made from silk or plastic.

Common Yuletide plants such as mistletoe and holly berries can be potentially toxic to pets. Should a cat or dog eat mistletoe, they could possibly suffer gastrointestinal upset and cardiovascular problems. Holly can cause vomiting, nausea, diarrhea and lethargy if ingested.

Poinsettias are considered to be very low in toxicity. However, they could cause mild vomiting or nausea if ingested by your pet.

Christmas tree water may contain dangerous fertilizers, which if ingested, can cause stomach upset. Stagnant tree water can also act as a breeding ground for bacteria and if ingested a pet could end up with nausea, vomiting and diarrhea.

If ingested, decorations such as ribbons or tinsel can become lodged in the intestines and cause intestinal obstruction. This is a very common problem, particularly with cats.

Consider decorating your tree with animal safe ornaments that are relatively less enticing to pets, such as dried non-toxic flowers, wood, fabric or pinecones.

For over 25 years, the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center has been the premier animal poison control center in North America. The center, an allied agency of the University of Illinois, is the only facility of its kind staffed by 25 veterinarians including 5 board-certified veterinary toxicologists and 10 certified veterinary technicians. Located in Urbana, Illinois, the specially trained staff provides assistance to pet owners and specific analysis and treatment recommendations to veterinarians pertaining to toxic chemicals and dangerous plants, products or substances 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. In 2003, the center handled over 88,000 cases. In addition, the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center provides extensive veterinary toxicology consulting on a wide array of subjects including legal cases, formulation issues, product liability, regulatory reporting and bio surveillance. To reach the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center, call 1-888-426-4435. For more information on the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center visit [www.apcc.aspca.org](http://www.apcc.aspca.org). (1/04)

