

Remember pet safety during holidays

During the holiday season the house fills with the warm scent of baking; shiny, glittering decorations; and wrapped and ribboned gifts sure to tempt the curiosity of most pets, especially cats and dogs. As we deck the halls and feast upon treats it's important to be aware of potential dangers to your pet. Here are some safety tips to help your pet enjoy the holidays:

Tip 1: Prevent your pet from sneaking sweets

Holiday sweets with chocolate are not for pets - chocolate contains theobromine which can be poisonous to many animals, such as dogs, cats and ferrets, depending on the amount ingested. And, the less sweet the chocolate, the more toxic it could be. For example, 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.

Tip 2: Don't pass the platter to your pet

Maintain your pet's regular diet - just one "special" meal during the holidays 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. Holiday dinner leftovers also have lurking dangers for pets. For example, poultry bones can splinter and cause blockages. Greasy, spicy and fatty foods can cause stomach upset; spoiled or moldy foods could cause

food poisoning, tremors or seizures. And don't forget to store the garbage safely out of reach from your pet.

Tip 3: Prevent accidental alcohol consumption

Don't place alcoholic drinks in reach of pets. If your pet ingests alcohol, he can become very sick and weak and may go into a coma, possibly resulting in death from respiratory failure.

Tip 4: Keep toxic florals out of your pet's reach

Caution must be used when choosing to decorate your home with holiday florals such as mistletoe and holly berries, which can be potentially toxic to pets. Should a cat or dog eat mistletoe, they could suffer gastrointestinal upset and cardiovascular problems. Holly can cause vomiting, nausea, diarrhea and lethargy if ingested. Common holiday plants such as poinsettias are considered to be very low in toxicity, but they can still cause mild vomiting or nausea if ingested by your pet, and can irritate your pet's mouth. Lilies, appearing in many holiday floral arrangements, can cause kidney failure in cats. Beware of toxic varieties including: Asian, Casa Blanca, Japanese Show, Stargazer and Tiger. You may want to consider silk or plastic floral arrangements as a safe alternative, or placing plants out of reach of your pet.

Tip 5: Use Christmas trees with caution

From top to bottom, Christmas trees pose many dangers to pets. Christmas tree water may contain fertilizers, and if ingested, can cause stomach upset. Stagnant tree water

may be full of bacteria, which could cause nausea, vomiting and diarrhea in your pet. Decorations such as ribbons are very attractive to pets, especially cats, and if ingested can cause intestinal obstruction. Sparkly lights are equally attractive, but can become life threatening if your pet decides to chew the cords. Consider decorating your tree, or at least the bottom third, with ornaments that are less likely to attract your pet's attention, such as dried non-toxic flowers, wood, fabric or pinecones. Ensure any tinsel, ribbons, ornaments and ornament hooks that fall to the floor are picked up immediately and secure your tree so that it can't be toppled or knocked over. Supervise your pet and use barriers (e.g. baby gates) and topical pet deterrents (e.g. bitter apple spray, a bad-tasting substance available from most pet stores) as necessary to keep your pet safe from holiday temptations.

Tip 6: Be watchful of toys that present choking hazards

If you have children's toys under your tree, be as cautious with your pet playing with them as you would a child. Toys with removable parts or small pieces pose a serious choking hazard for pets as well as children.

Tip 7: Take precautions to avoid pet escapes

With guests coming and going during the holidays take extra care that your pet does not escape outside and become lost. Cats in particular are prone to hiding and/or bolting when guests, especially a large number of them, visit your home. Dogs should also be carefully supervised as they may become

over-excited with all of the holiday celebrations. One solution is to place your pet in a quiet, safe and comfortable part of the house away from all of the guests, but with access to food, water, litter box, etc. Alternatively, you may wish to use a crate, baby gate or x-pen (a metal exercise pen for dogs that comes in a variety of sizes) for short periods to keep animals from getting underfoot during the festive frenzy while allowing them to be part of the celebration.

Tip 8: Think carefully before giving a pet as a present

In addition to these precautions, also remember that the holiday season may not be the ideal time to bring a new animal into your home. If you have planned to add a new pet to your family during the holidays, ensure that you will be home to provide the care and attention your new family member will require as he adjusts to his new environment.

Alternatively, you could adopt your pet before Christmas, but wait until after the holidays to bring him home - honour your family's pet adoption by placing a photo of him under the tree, or a stuffed animal representative of your new pet, or pet products and accessories for when he does arrive. While planned pet adoptions as gifts are great, it is not recommended to give pets as "surprise" gifts to friends or family members.

Remember, the best holiday present for your pet is plenty of love and attention. Include your pet in your holiday activities and give him or her lots of pats, play time and appropriate exercise.



Springwater's Guergis new Warden

Simcoe County Council held its Inaugural Meeting, swearing in a new County Council and a new Warden.

Springwater Township Mayor Tony Guergis was acclaimed and sworn in as Simcoe County Warden for 2007 and the 145th Warden of the County by Justice of the Peace Malcolm Rogers.

Council Chambers were filled with guests and dignitaries from the Province, local municipalities, hospitals, friends, family and well-wishers.

Upon swearing in Guergis, Council recognized the many guests which included past wardens.

Council also held

elections for Committee Chairs.

Councillor Anita Dubeau will chair Performance Management while Councillor Doug Little will chair Corporate Services and Councillor James Downer will chair Human Services.

Heart-heating tributes were paid to out-going Warden Terry Geddes. Geddes delivered remarks to Council and offered advice to the new Council forewarning of the challenges that lay ahead concerning growth.

"What an incredible day!" declared Guergis. "It's truly an honour and a privilege to hold the Office of Warden and to lead this

dynamic new Council. Simcoe County is entering a new stage in its life as we grapple [with the issues of serious growth and I am humbled to be entrusted by my colleagues to lead this first year of what promises to be an exciting and fruitful term for what is certainly one of the best places one could ever live."

Guergis is the cousin to

MP Helena Guergis, and brother of Essa Mayor Dave Guergis.

The County of Simcoe is composed of 16 member municipalities and provides crucial public services to County residents in addition to providing paramedic and social services to the separated cities of Barrie and Orillia.

Margaret Harlos held the grand opening of her business, Living Organized, last Thursday. Living Organized is a full service professional company serving Innisfil, Barrie and South Simcoe. Mayor Brian Jackson attended the grand opening, presenting Margaret with a certificate from the Town. The company will help those who need help organizing their home or office, to maximize their space and use it to its fullest potential. For more information, check out the website at www.living-organized.ca.

photo by Michelle Minnoch

I would like to thank the voters for their confidence and support at the polls.

I would also like to thank my family and friends for their hard work and assistance during my election campaign.

On behalf of my wife and myself, I want to wish everyone Happy Holidays and a prosperous New Year.

Thanks again,
Bill Van Berkel



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Thank you Innisfil for your support

Looking forward to working for you and with you.

Councillor Rod Boynton & family