

## Holiday Considerations with Cats

As anyone who has lived with cats knows, they are driven to explore and dig into the contents of bags or boxes, especially if these novel items have just recently appeared. And Christmas is one holiday that can supply just this kind of fun. Sparkly decorations, strings of lights, ribbons, and dangling tinsel are impossible to resist. Hanukkah's traditions involve candles, which is a scary thought if young, unsupervised kittens are left to play.

Since holidays are sprinkled throughout the year, it's important to be aware of the potential issues these days can present for cats. This may sound obvious, but supervision is number one. Whether it's a door that's left open or lit candles, things happen fast.

### Holiday Hazards

- Essential oils at full strength can create chemical burns on cats' tongues when they try to clean themselves after oil has spilled on their coats
- Cats have been known to jump and climb Christmas trees which can cause them to topple. Secure trees to the wall with hooks and fishing line.
- A word of caution about cats drinking the water your tree sits in, it may contain bacteria and/or fertilizer
- Holiday plants that pose a danger to cats are lilies (common at Easter), holly, mistletoe and possibly poinsettia. Avoid these if possible or keep them higher than your cats can climb.
- Curly-cue ribbon, flowing tinsel, electrical cords, dangling lights, tiny parts from your kids' toys, and sparkly ornaments can all pose a risk for cats. Anything long and stringy could create a medical emergency for your cat if ingested.
- 4<sup>th</sup> of July can be extremely stressful for cats who are sensitive to loud noises. Make plans to stay home with your cats, play music, or watch a movie and keep windows and shades closed to lessen the noise and flash of fireworks. They can also be startled by vibrations. Keep them up off the floor, ideally on cushioned bedding with you, to prevent them from feeling any vibration.
- Skip the fake snow! Depending on the chemicals used, this can be toxic for cats.
- A table laden with holiday foods and desserts could also be trouble for cats. This is another reason they will be safest tucked away in their own room.
- Keep your cats separated from your fireplace with a screen. Even if the fire has died, you don't want your cats to wander in where embers may be smoldering.

### Prevention

Be realistic. If you'll have a house full of people for just one night or a week, it will still be a challenge for you to keep an eye on your cats. Set your cats up in their own room with everything they need so you don't need to be hyper-vigilant. Leave a note on the door asking people not to go in, mainly so the cats don't get out. Even friendly cats can become overwhelmed or possibly skittish with multiple strangers infiltrating their home, not to mention the increase in noise this will create. This reaction is not unusual for cats, so be prepared and take precautions to keep your cats safely tucked away.

## Traveling During Holidays

Most cats are not fans of change, or fond of traveling. If you add **holiday** travel into the mix, you best have one easy-going feline you're planning to travel with! Imagine you've arrived at your destination with your cat, but there's no question...she is very unhappy being there, now what? Unless you know, without a doubt, that your cat is more like a dog in this respect, it's kinder to leave her home where life is safe and predictable for her.

## Resources

If your cat is staying home for the holidays, refer to the Choosing a Cat Sitter handout [Choosing a cat sitter.pdf](#)

ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center Phone Number: (888) 426-4435

People food your cat should avoid:

<https://www.aspca.org/pet-care/animal-poison-control/people-foods-avoid-feeding-your-pets>

**Need help? Call our free pet behavior help line at (503) 416-2983.**