

PETS & PEOPLE

Make Sure Holidays Are Safe For Pets

(NAPSA)—Think a turkey neck or table scraps should be a part of Fido's holiday tradition? Think again—too much festive feasting can be deadly for pets. While a family pet often plays a part in holiday celebrations, new foods and decorations around the house this time of year can pose hazardous temptations for them.

The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) has some advice on having a healthy holiday by remembering to plan for the safety of your cat, dog or bird:

- Table scraps should definitely not be a part of your pet's holiday tradition. Gravy, meat fats and poultry skin can cause a life-threatening condition called pancreatitis in dogs, and bones can splinter in an animal's stomach.

- Even though it tastes delicious, chocolate should be kept out of the reach of dogs because it is poisonous to them. The darker the chocolate, the more dangerous it is. The dense chocolate used for baking is most deadly.

- Avoid sweets—a study reported in the *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association* in 2006 linked xylitol—a common sweetener in baked goods, candy and chewing gum—with liver failure and death in dogs.

- Give your pet healthy snacks and rewards for the holidays, and include lots of attention and exercise. If you are not sure about healthy treats for your particular pet, ask your veterinarian.

- If you celebrate with a tree in your home, make sure it is an-



chored. Some cats and pet birds may be tempted to climb or land on the decorations. If it topples, it could cause severe injuries. Also, make sure to keep pets away from the tree water, as tree preservatives and tree sap can cause gastrointestinal problems.

- Never leave a pet alone with a lit candle or exposed flame but also be wary of exposed extension cords, ornaments and tinsel. Cats sometimes consume tinsel and other small decorations, which can block intestines.

- Some holiday plants—such as poinsettia, holly, cedar, balsam, pine and mistletoe—are poisonous.

- Finally, make sure any pets new to the family this December will be welcome for years to come. Giving up a poorly selected new pet in January is heartbreaking.

Give your pets a couple of festive gifts that they truly deserve—health and safety. For more information on this and other pet issues, contact the AVMA at www.avma.org.