

Dr. Oakley

Hi! It's Dr. Oakley again, for the Lebanon Veterinary Hospital. I wanted to talk to you about pet safety and the cold weather.

With the holidays upon us and all the cooking and eating going on, I will tell you that it is a very busy season at the hospital. The worst and unfortunately more common cases that we expect include cats eating tinsel and dogs raiding trash cans and eating leftovers, cooking bags, and other wrappers. Sadly, these are serious medical issues that have to be addressed immediately and are generally expensive. Sometimes, the items that can do the most damage are things we wouldn't ordinarily think of. Remember that mayonnaise, pie crust and gravies quickly become breeding grounds for bacteria as soon as they warm up in your trash and if your pet should get them, you can have food poisoning on your hands. I must add that I find piecrust and gravy, in particular, very appealing so lock up those trash cans!! (I can't believe I said that!)

Our pets are at greater risk in the cold weather for many other things as well. Antifreeze, which can collect on driveways and roadways, is poisonous and pleasant tasting to animals. Rock salt used to melt ice on sidewalks may irritate your pets' pads (and your floors when they track it inside!). Be sure to rinse and dry your dogs and cats feet after they've had access to roads or walkways. Look into a foot protectant, like "Musher's Wax" to keep salt from burning pads and it also keeps long haired pets from getting those painful "snowballs" between their toes. Frostbite can occur on ears, tails and feet. Be mindful of the length of time your pets spend outside. If they are outdoor pets, make sure that they have adequate shelter and bedding. Groom your pets regularly as a well maintained coat is good insulation from the cold. Increase your active or outdoor pets' caloric intake to help provide them with the necessary energy to stay warm. The healthiest fix for winter dandruff and dry skin issues is to add oil to our diets. Olive and coconut are easy to find and two of the best for us. Use a teaspoon a day for a 30 to 40 lb. dog or up to a tablespoon for a large 90 pound dog. Coconut oil has been known to decrease "doggy" odor and one half to one teaspoon daily for a medium size dog (30 to 40 lbs.). You can use either one, but don't forget to refrigerate the coconut oil.

Keep in mind that some of Santa's favorite things aren't necessarily good for my four legged friends. Tinsel, we already mentioned can obstruct the intestines. Holly, mistletoe and poinsettia plants should be kept out of reach of pets.

This winter, enjoy your time outdoors with your pets. We all can use the exercise and many of us four- leggers love playing in the snow as much as the children I see out there! Ski-jouring (cross country skiing with the dog out front helping to pull) can be great fun for both you and your dog. Mrs. Zickmann helps me pull the kids on the sled, one child at a time, of course. I love to chase snow balls; it constantly amazes me how they disappear once they hit the ground.

Remember-be safe, warm and have fun. Happy Holidays!!

Stay well!

Dr. Oakley