

## Helpful Holiday Tips

As the holiday season approaches, we wanted to offer some suggestions to make it safer and, hopefully, even more enjoyable for you and your bird. We have included a few edible "treats for your pet bird that may offer new and exciting ways to present table foods to them. Have a Happy and Safe Holiday and Bon Appetit!

During the holiday season, the media usually reminds us of fire safety tips in relation to cords, lights, and plant decorations.

Please remember that cords to any electrical device will pose the threat of electrocution if your bird chews on it. Usually, flashing lights compound the temptation by making the cords especially attractive.

Many common holiday plants are also tempting with their bright colors and graceful displays. Unless you are absolutely certain the plant is not toxic to birds, please keep them at a safe distance from chewing. The three most popular holiday plants are:

- 1) Mistletoe, of which, sudden death can occur;
- 2) Holly, which is especially toxic;
- 3) Poinsettias, which are not as toxic as mistletoe and holly, but can, still have disastrous effects.

The most common food poison to present during any holiday is chocolate toxicity. The type of chocolate eaten, along with the actual amount ingested, are useful in determining how toxic this popular food will be for your pet. Chocolate ingestion can lead to death.

Candles, incense, and potpourri are also popular during the holidays. Unfortunately, these too can present lethal respiratory problems for your pet. If you can smell a fragrance, it is usually too strong for your pet. Birds have amazingly efficient respiratory systems, especially when compared to humans. This efficiency, however, leaves them even more susceptible to respiratory toxins.

While not normally presenting respiratory problems, ornaments and decorations frequently lead to digestive and neurologic problems. Many ornaments, including the popular stained glass variety, contain lead, zinc, and/or other dangers. Remember, the only metal that is 100% safe around your pet bird is stainless steel. Refer to our zinc handout for more information on this common but often insidious metal toxicity.

Probably one of the easiest overlooked holiday problems with our pet birds is the increased stress. Just as we increase our stress with all the hustle and bustle, so do our pets. Even if their schedule remains the same, they often feel and mirror our stress levels. Be gentle and have plenty of quiet "down" time for yourself and your bird. Remember too, visitors can be a joy and a disruption at the same time.

If traveling with your pets, be sure to check ahead to ensure your pet will be welcome wherever you are staying. Do not forget your health certificate if traveling outside the state. The AAA has published a book on traveling with your pet that lists four-legged friendly accommodations. Call

to verify feathered friends are welcome.

If leaving your pet at home with a sitter, be sure to provide emergency phone numbers along with your veterinary and emergency clinic phone numbers. It may also be a good idea to leave a notarized authorization letter for emergency treatment. Another useful thought is to set up financial arrangements to a certain dollar amount to cover any unforeseen emergencies.

Hopefully, we have given you some "food for thought" to help plan your holiday season.

Happy Holidays!

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