

## 'Tis the Season...for Food Hazards!

### The Dish on Holiday Food Hazards

The holiday season is upon us, and with it comes the commencement of some of our favorite holiday traditions. While the hanging of holly, lighting of trees, and cooking of festive foods are among some of the rituals that make this season the most enjoyable time of the year, such activities also serve as a potential source of danger to our four-legged companions.

Festive events often mean edible treats—and lots of them. Unfortunately, some of the most popular holiday goodies, such as chocolate, bones and nuts, can be extremely toxic or fatal to animals. As such, NC State's Student Chapter of the American Association of Veterinary Nutrition (SCAAVN) would like to provide you with a list of some of the most hazardous food items that your pet may come into contact with this holiday season.

### Common Holiday Food Hazards

#### 1. Chocolate (#1 cause of food poisoning)

- Different types of chocolate contain various levels of fat, caffeine and the substances methylxanthines.
- In general, the darker and richer the chocolate (i.e., baker's chocolate), the higher the risk of toxicity.
- Depending on the type and amount of chocolate ingested, dogs might experience vomiting, diarrhea, urination, hyperactivity, heart arrhythmias, tremors and seizures.

#### 2. Bones and Fat Trimmings

- Fat trimmed from meat, both cooked and undercooked, may cause pancreatitis.
- Bones can also splinter and cause an obstruction or lacerations of your dog's digestive system.

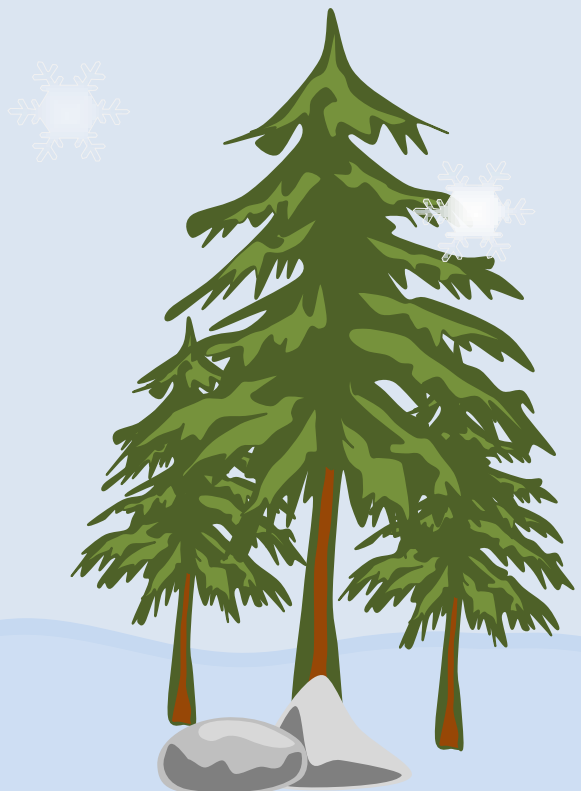
#### 3. Raisins and Grapes

- Known to cause kidney failure in pets and can also be a choking hazard.

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*The holidays are a wonderful time of year, but dangers abound for your four-legged family members!*



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### Common Holiday Food Hazards (Continued)

#### 4. Nuts

- Abundant in many cookies and candies.
- Almonds, non-moldy walnuts and pistachios can cause an upset stomach or an obstruction of your dog's throat and/or intestinal tract.
- Macadamia nuts and moldy walnuts can be toxic, causing seizures or neurological signs.
- Lethargy, vomiting and loss of muscle control are among the effects of nut ingestion.

#### 5. Milk and Dairy Products

- Though cartoons perpetuate the myth that pets can tolerate dairy products, this couldn't be further from the truth.
- Animals lack the proper enzymes to digest dairy products, and large amounts can result in intense diarrhea.
- The rule of thumb here: leave the milk out for Santa, not Fido or Fluffy.

#### 6. Holiday Plants

- Pine needles can produce oral irritation, vomiting, lethargy, trembling and hind limb weakness.
- Holly—a common staple of the Christmas season—may cause intense vomiting, diarrhea and depression.
- Mistletoe, another Christmas plant, can also cause intense vomiting, diarrhea and depression.
- Poinsettias can cause irritation to the mouth and stomach. However, despite some of the online claims, they rarely cause death and are fine to have in a household with closely monitored pets.



*Did you know: The ASPCA's poison control hotline handled 167,000 cases of potential animal poisonings last year. Keep your pets safe!*

