

Keeping Your Parrot Safe During the Holidays

by the World Parrot Trust

Everyone loves the holidays – but the holidays don't always love companion parrots. Here is a list of possible dangers to be on the lookout for:

- 1. Pets and the kitchen:** hot pans and stove burners (burns, scalding), fumes from Teflon-coated pans (toxic), kitchen sink (danger from drowning in sink filled with water; the same with bathroom sink and toilet), preparation areas for poultry may be contaminated with bacteria. Much better if a bird is kept right out of these areas
- 2. Lighted candles or other fragrances:** different fragrances and smells may be present during holidays (cooking fumes, lighted candles) Watch your bird for signs of respiratory distress from these. Also be on the alert for burns from lighted candles
- 3. Christmas tree and ornaments:** sparkly tinsel and other items are tempting toys - chewed on and ingested will cause serious digestive problems
- 4. Electric lights and toys:** wire cords are an electrocution hazard, particularly when chewed on
- 5. Small toys and parts:** these swallowed can cause serious digestive issues
- 6. Rich and sweet foods:** too much or certain high-fat or high-sugar goodies may upset digestive systems in pet birds, or worse
- 7. Foods with physical hazards:** pet birds may become ensnared in six-pack beverage holders or shopping bags; cooked bones from turkey may shatter (if your bird indulges in turkey, that is)
- 8. Increased activity and company:** pet birds like routine – more things happening and strange people dropping in can upset them. Look for feather plucking or screaming when none present before. Make sure you give your bird extra attention; there's a good chance he is stressed
- 9. Increased risk of escape:** when guests come calling ensure that they know to keep doors, windows and other areas of escape firmly closed. Better yet, this is the time for birds to be busy in their own room/enclosure
- 10. Small children and other pets:** in the excitement one may bite the other; danger of trampling small birds underfoot
- 11. Pets as Christmas presents** – Christmas is not a good time for newly adopted parrots to become secure in their new surroundings; everything too hyper and busy
- 12. Presents for pets:** If giving a present to your pet, make sure it is suitable for the species (ie right size) and non-toxic, non-injurious (no sharp edges, no loops to get caught in)

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13. **Cold weather:** smaller animals may succumb to hypothermia (extreme low body temperature) quickly if let out accidentally
14. **Noise-makers and loud music:** noisy people, New Year's toys, and others can stress and/or scare birds that are not used to them
15. **Extra lighting and longer hours:** try to maintain the same light cycle that your bird is used to – extra lighting (indoor and out) may disrupt this. Keeping your parrot in its own bird 'bedroom' can achieve this
16. **Holiday costumes with rubber bands:** – be wary of these; may constrict around the necks of pets that wear them

Keeping in mind that your parrot is a very intelligent, curious animal will help remind you that he can get into as much trouble (and more!) as a small human toddler. *Always consult your avian vet if you encounter a problem with your parrot.* By being cautious and avoiding tragedy you can enjoy your holidays with your entire family, feathered and human.

Sources:

Article: Cornell University Science News: 101 Temptations await pets at holiday time, and some are toxic
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Holiday dangers to parrots and pet birds

<http://birds.about.com/od/birdsafetytips/a/christmassafety.htm>

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This article is provided for information purposes only and should not replace an avian veterinarian's advice. The World Parrot Trust encourages people to seek help for their pet birds from a qualified professional.