

## Animal Groups Talk Turkey for Cats

### Experts offer Thanksgiving guidelines for pet safety.

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Cat owners should be cautious of the foods they give their pets over the Thanksgiving holiday. As pet owners get ready for Thanksgiving, animal welfare groups are reminding people to keep their cats and dogs safe this time of year. Thanksgiving table scraps, for example, aren't what they're carved out to be, according to North Shore Animal League America.

The New York-based organization urges pet owners to resist the temptation of becoming overly generous to avoid injury or illness to their pets. Here are some safety tips: Too many fatty, rich or new types of foods can give your pet pancreatitis or gastroenteritis, medical conditions that can be painful and even life-threatening. Make no bones about it — bones can cut or block your pets' insides. Save the bones for the broth — not the cat or dog. Onions and onion powder, widely found in stuffing, will destroy your dog or cat's red blood cells, which can lead to anemia. Grapes and raisins contain a toxin that can cause kidney damage to dogs and cats. Chocolate can be fatal to your dog or cat; those sweets must be kept out of reach. Aluminum foil, wax paper and other food wrappings can cause intestinal obstruction. Make sure to place these items securely in the garbage. Maintain your pet's regular meal and exercise schedule — avoiding too many leftovers. A disruption in meal times can cause stomach upset, diarrhea and vomiting. Make sure your pet always has fresh water. When there are more people in the house, there's more chance to bump into the water bowl, leaving your pet dry. Make sure your pet has a quiet retreat should the holiday festivities be too much for him. Watch his behavior to make sure he is not stressed. Keep an eye on the garbage and keep it securely fastened. If your dog or cat get into it, they may face health problems ranging from gastric disturbance, vomiting and diarrhea to the worst-case scenario — death.

The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Los Angeles also shared holiday safety tips, including a reminder that cats and dogs wear ID tags with current address and phone number, as well as being microchipped. This is especially important during the holidays, according to spcaLA, as there may be a greater risk of pets escaping because of increased visitors.

If holiday plans include many more guests than your pets are used to, spcaLA said animals should be secured in a separate room with some favorite toys and a cozy pet bed. Soft music can help soothe them.

In addition, the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals warned against sage, which contains oils and resins that can cause pets to suffer stomach upset and possible depression of the central nervous system. To give cats and dogs their own feast, the ASPCA said pet owners can provide bits of turkey, dribbles of gravy or vegetables like sweet potato and green beans.

"As you begin to prepare for a festive season, remember to be wary of activities that can be potentially dangerous to pets," said Steven Hansen, senior vice president of Animal Health Services, which includes ASPCA's Animal Poison Control Center in Urbana, Ill.