



Feline Forum

Courtesy of:

Holiday Hazards

The holidays provide additional health hazards for pets, especially from unintentional poisonings. However, you can make your home safer for your cat by taking the proper precautions or changing how you decorate.

Many of the **holiday plants** (amaryllis, Christmas mistletoe, English holly, Jerusalem cherry) can be potentially poisonous to cats. Reactions can range from mild to severe. Applying hot pepper sauce to the leaves and stems of plants will deter most cats from nibbling on plants. Another alternative is to locate plants out of the cat's reach or territory.

Holiday greens are not very toxic to cats, but the volatile oils in the saps can cause skin irritation (contact dermatitis), eye inflammation (conjunctivitis), or gastric irritation.

Many common **decorations** such as candles, ornaments, icicles and Styrofoam are considered non-toxic but may cause problems by irritating or obstructing the digestive or respiratory tracts. Angel hair has low toxicity but may cause irritation to eyes, skin, and the digestive tract. Your veterinarian can provide medications to soothe these irritations.

Bubble lights contain chlorinated hydrocarbon methylene chloride in unspecified concentrations. This compound is considered mildly toxic. Exposure results by eating or breathing the chemical. Clinical signs include depression or convulsions. Large amounts can cause liver and kidney damage. Exposure to this chemical can be properly treated by your veterinarian.

Tree preservatives contain glucose, fertilizer and iron salts. It's the fertilizer and iron salts that are the most toxic. Ingesting large quantities of these chemicals may cause irritation to the digestive system, resulting in vomiting. Covering the tree holder with a tree skirt or plastic sheeting will prevent your cat from drinking the treated water.

Fireplace colors are created from salts of various metals such as copper, barium, lead, arsenic, selenium, and others. They are considered moderately toxic. Toxic reactions include convulsions and vomiting. Treatments will be directed toward the specific metals(s) ingested.

Sprays and snow flock are relatively inert chemicals with low toxicity. Ingredients include a combination of various halogenated hydrocarbons, methylene chloride, and resins. Signs of contact include mild eye irritation, vomiting and central nervous system depression.

Removing Cat Odors

Cat odors can be safely eliminated from the house by using these simple procedures when cleaning:

Use a diluted chlorine bleach solution (4 ounces of bleach to one gallon of water) to neutralize odors and disinfect litter boxes.

Treat urine-stained carpets immediately with a deodorizer and cleaning solution. If the padding underneath is soiled, it must be removed. If the stain occurs on concrete, clean the surface and then apply a sealer to the concrete.

On the Lighter Side

Do you find yourself referring to your cat as *Thunder Thighs*, *Fatso*, *Butter Ball* or *Chunkers*? If so, perhaps it's time you considered a more restricted diet for your rotund feline friend.

Before you begin a reduction diet for old *Butter Ball*, consult with your veterinarian. Your veterinarian can determine if a disease is affecting your cat's metabolic rate. Also, he/she can determine the best weight reduction program for your cat based on your cat's age, health, body build, and lifestyle.

The information for *Feline Forum* has been prepared by the Cornell Feline Health Center, Cornell College of Veterinary Medicine, Ithaca, NY. Copyright 1995.



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On the Lighter Side

Do you find yourself referring to your cat as *Thunder Thighs*, *Fatso*, *Butter Ball* or *Chunkers*? If so, perhaps it's time you considered a more restricted diet for your rotund feline friend. Current studies indicate that one out of every four cats seen by veterinarians are overweight. Animals that are 15 percent over their ideal weight are classified as obese. The ideal weight for an adult cat can vary from 8 to 12 pounds, depending on body build (i.e., a larger frame cat would weigh more than a smaller frame cat).

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