

## Ferret-Proof For The Holidays

**Be safe, not sorry, by ferret-proofing for this holiday season.**

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You and your ferrets can enjoy the holidays together when you take precautions for your pet's safety.

All holidays are a special time of the year for joy and happiness. But don't compromise your joy with tragedy. Safety must be a top priority for your 2-legged kids and your 4-legged kids. Halloween through New Year's is a festive time that brings friends and family into our homes. The addition of new smells and shiny new objects raises the curiosity of ferrets. Take precautions to protect your furry friends, or an unexpected tragedy could occur. Here are some dangers to watch for during some of the holidays.

### Hidden Dangers

Valentine's Day, St. Patrick's Day, Easter, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas, birthdays, and all cultural and religious events: All these events present the same dangers as New Year's and the party scene. For these celebrations, a large part of our society provides food and drink, including alcohol. These items tantalize us, and they also tantalize our ferrets. Ferrets on the loose can and will gain access to the food table and will gleefully sample everything, a lot of which is not good for them.

**Halloween:** Each holiday brings its own unique areas of danger. During Halloween, those bagfuls of candy in the house will cause serious problems if ferrets ingest them. No candy is good for a ferret to ingest due to the candy's high sugar content and the possibility of it causing an intestinal blockage. If ferrets can gain access to Halloween candy, they will hide their newfound treat. Ferrets that have the run of the house during trick or treat may slip through an outside door unnoticed. Never have a ferret in your arms while treating the little gremlins that ring your doorbell. The trick-or-treaters may want to pet your ferret and that is an invitation for a possible ferret nip. Also, the little gremlins knocking at your door will have on funny costumes that could scare your pets.

**Thanksgiving:** This holiday brings many new smells and new people that your ferrets do not recognize. When you visit family or friends, leave your ferrets at home in a safe and secure room or cage. When family or friends visit you, secure your ferrets in their room or cage for safety. If small children visiting your home want to handle your ferrets, always closely supervise such interaction. It only takes one nip or toenail scratch to cause a confrontation. Ferrets should never be out amidst your guests. A ferret being stepped on can ruin any family gathering.

**Christmas:** Ferrets have been known to climb to great heights to jump into a Christmas tree or at least to try to climb up it. Of course, there's always the possibility of injury, and a fully decorated Christmas tree toppling to the floor is disastrous — another mess to clean up as well as ornaments destroyed. And I haven't met a ferret yet that didn't want to make the water-filled tree stand their drinking water supply or bathtub. Your best choice in a tree stand is one with just the small opening at the top for the tree trunk to fit in. But even with that, cover any exposed opening with wire to keep ferret heads out so they don't get them stuck.

We all want our Christmas trees to be beautifully decorated from top to bottom. But those electric lights and shining glass ornaments hanging on the lower branches are an open invitation to your ferrets. Some electric lights become very hot and could cause paws, mouths and noses to get burned. If an electrical cord is chewed on, it could result in an electric shock or even death for your ferret. Glass ornaments are known to disappear if hung on low branches. Ferrets bat them around and pull them off to drag to their hidey-hole, frequently breaking them in the process. This means broken glass that will cut your ferret or cause internal damage if ingested.

Tinsel, angel hair, artificial snow and icicles, if eaten, also pose a potential for a medical emergency. If eaten by your ferret, they can cause intestinal blockage that warrants an emergency trip to the vet or emergency surgery. Keep all your tree decorations high and out of reach of your ferrets.

Electrical cords are an everyday hazard for your ferrets and are to be a part of your ferret-proofing. As additional electrical cords are used during the holidays, don't forget to take the necessary precautions. No matter what holiday, keep all decorations out of reach of your ferrets or keep your ferrets in cages in a separate area away from the decorations or

under constant monitoring. All ferrets love playing in the Christmas wrap and empty boxes thrown on the floor, so supervise them.

**New Year's Eve:** Whether it's a nice, quiet evening with close friends or a big, noisy, all-out New Year's bash, keep your ferrets safe as the new year arrives. All too often, humans who overindulge in alcoholic spirits become totally irresponsible for the pets in the family. Ferrets can get stepped on, kicked, tossed or just plain tormented by out of control adults and kids. Avoid noisemakers, poppers, appetizers or alcohol for any of your 4-legged kids. And beware of an out-of-control guest who might hold your ferret in the air by its tail.

#### Holiday Decorations

Other than being trampled under the feet of friends and family at a party, one of the most hazardous distractions for our ferrets are those enticing shiny decorations. What is so beautiful for us poses a danger for your ferret. Many holiday plants are dangerous for pets to nibble on, and their enthusiastic digging can be a danger if they inhale any of the dirt. Lighted candles create a beautiful and scented environment, but a ferret investigating a lighted candle can easily suffer burned whiskers, catch on fire or cause a fire in the home.

#### Food

Most holiday foods are not wise or safe to offer to a ferret. Ferrets are meat eaters, so vegetables, fruits, breads, gravy and desserts are not good for them. A slice of unseasoned turkey, lamb, pork, chicken or beef, however, is just great. Keep the seasoned skin away from your ferrets. In addition to meat, a tiny bit of non-dairy whipped topping is a safe treat for their celebration of the holidays.

#### Be Safe, Have Fun

Don't let the holidays become a yearly reminder of a tragedy that you could have prevented. Whether it is the angel hair or artificial snow on your Christmas tree or the Jack O'Lantern in October, think of decorating through the eyes of your ferret. Don't let your ferrets go trick or treating through your candy. A safe holiday for your ferret is the best holiday for both of you.

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