

# Valentine's Day Safety Tips



Every Year veterinarians see a rise in cases around February 14, many involving chocolate or lilies, a flower that's potentially fatal to cats. Valentine's Day can be as much fun for pets as it is for humans—as long as dangerous items are kept out of paws' reach!

## **Pet-Safe Bouquets**

When sending a floral arrangement to someone with a cat, specify that it contain no lilies—and when receiving an arrangement, sift through and remove all dangerous flora. If your pet is suffering from symptoms such as lethargy, vomiting or diarrhea, he may have ingested an offending flower or plant. Use our online toxic and nontoxic plant libraries as visual guides of what shouldn't be in your bouquets.

## **Forbidden Chocolate**

Seasoned pet lovers know that all types of chocolate are potentially life-threatening when ingested by pets. Methylxanthines are caffeine-like stimulants that affect gastrointestinal, neurologic and cardiac function—they can cause vomiting, diarrhea, hyperactivity, seizures and an abnormally elevated heart rate. The high-fat content in lighter chocolates can potentially lead to a life-threatening inflammation of the pancreas. Go ahead and indulge, but don't leave chocolate out for chowhounds to find.

## **Careful with Cocktails**

Spilled wine, a half a glass of champagne or some leftover liquor are nothing to cry over until a curious pet laps them up. Because animals are smaller than humans, a little bit of alcohol can do a lot of harm, causing vomiting, diarrhea, lack of coordination, central nervous system depression, tremors, difficulty breathing, metabolic disturbances and even coma. Potentially fatal respiratory failure can also occur if a large amount is ingested.

## **Life Is Sweet**

So don't let pets near treats sweetened with xylitol. If ingested, gum, candy, peanut butter and other treats that include this sweetener can result in hypoglycemia (a sudden drop in blood sugar). This can cause your pet to suffer depression, loss of coordination and seizures.

## **Every Rose Has Its Thorn**

Don't let pets near roses or other thorny-stemmed flowers. Biting, stepping on or swallowing their sharp, woody spines can cause serious infection if a puncture occurs. De-thorn your roses far away from pets.

## **Playing with Fire**

It's nice to set your evening a-glow with candlelight, but put out the fire when you leave the room. Pawing kittens and nosy pooches can burn themselves or cause a fire by knocking over unattended candles.

## Wrap It Up

Gather up tape, ribbons, bows, wrapping paper, cellophane and balloons after presents have been opened—if swallowed, these long, stringy and “fun-to-chew” items can get lodged in your pet’s throat or digestive tract, causing her to choke or vomit.

## The Furry Gift of Life?

Giving a cuddly puppy or kitten may seem a fitting Valentine’s Day gift—but, returning a pet to the shelter you hadn’t planned on is anything but romantic. Companion animals bring with them a lifelong commitment, and choosing a pet for someone else doesn’t always turn out right. Make a romantic date that includes a visit to a local area shelter/rescue group and let your loved one choose their own pet.

## Here are ten ways to show your pets you love them on Valentine’s Day:

1. Place a bird feeder outside their favorite window. Both dogs and cats enjoy the sights and sounds of birds on a sunny afternoon.
2. Make sure your cats and dogs get exercise daily. It’s good for both of you.
3. Buy some fancy furniture for your pets. A cat tree, kitty condo, or plush dog bed would be nice.
4. Give your pet hugs and kisses throughout the day. They love it!
5. Treat your pets to a massage. Experts will even come to your home.
6. Have your pets’ portraits painted or photographed.
7. Upgrade to a running water system. Pets love to drink from fountains.
8. Play soothing classical music all day long.
9. Have extra sessions of playtime.
10. Brush them from head to tail.

