

Holiday Hazards

The companion parrot is part of the family! When including our feathered friends in the holiday season we must keep them safe.

- **Christmas tree**—Electric wires represent an enticing danger for pet birds, and ornaments may be made from cheap materials containing heavy metals. Many trees are also sprayed with chemicals.
- Many **holiday plants** are also potentially toxic including:

Poinsettia (<i>Euphorbia pulcherrima</i>)	Mistletoe (<i>Viscum album</i>)
Holly (<i>Ilex</i> spp.)	Yew (<i>Cephalotaxus</i> sp.)
English Ivy (<i>Hedera helix</i>)	Chrysanthemum
- Of course, the holidays are also associated with lots of **cooking**. Confine your pet bird to its cage to prevent accidents with pots of boiling water and pans of frying food. Also, remember the danger of cooking fumes, particularly from overheated nonstick pots and pans. The release of polytetrafluoroethylene (Teflon) fumes is well known to be toxic, potentially cause bleeding and fluid in the lungs, and possible death.
- **Cleaning** agents may also release powerful fumes. Use of items like carpet cleaners and bleach have also been associated with death and illness.
- Never offer **sweet treats** like chocolate and sugary treats to pet birds. Chocolate contains theophylline, which is toxic to birds and animals. Sweets frequently irritate the gastrointestinal tract. Items containing caffeine, avocado, salty snacks, alcohol, and rhubarb should also not be offered.
- The highly efficient respiratory tract of the bird means that strong fumes or **strong smells** may be particularly irritating—and potentially dangerous. Do not expose your companion parrot to scented candles, potpourri, or room fresheners. Also protect your bird from second-hand smokers.
- Holiday **stress** is not just a problem for humans. Take your bird's personality into account when making them part of your holiday. Some individuals enjoy the noise and excitement of holiday festivities, while other birds may become stressed. Shy birds may do better with a view of holiday activity from a distance.

Regardless of your bird's personality, keep their daily schedule as consistent as possible and be sure to spend time with your pet on a daily basis.

Reference

Langlois C. Dashing through the holidays. *Bird Talk* November 1999. Pp.18-24.