

# Hazards in the home year round

## Christmas and company coming

By Dick Ivy, Yorktown, Va.

*Ho, ho, ho* could be *woe, woe, woe* for your birds this holiday season unless you take precautions and do some planning.

A favorite Christmas plant, Poinsettia leaves and flowers, are poisonous to birds that eat them. Holly berries are a no-no as are Jerusalem cherry berries and mistletoe. There's much of Virginia juniper poisonous, as are yew needles and seed.

So is the tinsel that hangs on your tree, and the glass balls and home made tree decorations with jewelry are pretty — and pretty dangerous if the bird cracks one with his beak, or nibbles off a jewel. And so are the pretty ribbons and the little colorful glass trinkets which hang from them.

If you want to be Santa and bring your pets toys, give them rope, wood and untreated rawhide chews. Avoid hard plastics.

Trying out new non-stickware given for Christmas presents? Be careful. Fumes from cooking without a liquid in the pan can produce deadly vapors for birds (won't do you any good either). Make a gift of stainless steel or glassware for cooking this year. Plan to clean non-stick self-cleaning ovens in the warm spring, summer or fall when you can move the birds and open the doors and windows and use fans. In the winter, move the bird to a friend's house.

Make sure, if you heat with kerosene, that the fumes can be vented to outside areas or have a high ceiling. Malfunctioning heaters should be fixed (need a new wick?) or scrapped and replaced. Keep them handy, however, should the electricity go off for days or hours.

**Signs of poisoning** are heavy breathing, cough, diarrhea, vomiting, unusual thirst, tremors, or your bird doesn't eat. In **The Parrot in Health and Sickness\*** by Bonnie Doane of Chicago, there's a section on what to do in poisoning cases when NO VET IS AVAILABLE. There is a recipe using egg-white and activated charcoal.

Did you know you could give artificial respiration to your parrot? If he stops breathing, give mouth-to-NOSE resuscitation. If he is in shock, his feet will be cold. Handle the bird carefully and keep the bird quiet and warm, and call the vet you are on your way.

FINDING A VET before a problem is far better than at the crisis. Remember, Christmas and New Year's are holidays for vets too. Ask your vet for the nearest emergency clinic he/she recommends, just in case.

\*Order from Avian Publications, 6380 Monroe St., Minneapolis, MN 55432. 1-800 577-2473. Item #119, \$24.95 plus s&h, even on a major credit card. [www.avianpublications.com](http://www.avianpublications.com) What a nice present for your bird. You can read it to the bird.

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Pet Information handouts/avi-pages

## When your birds are on display for your guests

\* A buttoned-up winter-time house is not adequately ventilated. Acrosols, furniture polish, oven cleaners, rug shampoos, insecticides and toilet bowl cleaners can all poison birds.

\* Apply grooming aids behind closed doors, away from birds: cologne, dusting powder, hair spray, deodorant, foot powder, perfume.

\* Keep cages away from drafts and cold open doors to the outside. Don't let guests linger in the doorway.

\* Clip wings of birds you normally let loose BEFORE the company comes.

\* Have a screen in front of fireplaces to keep birds from flying or walking into them.

\* Don't allow sick friends to handle, kiss, or feed your bird. Use paper towels and soap for hand washing. Insist on guests washing up before and after handling birds.

\* Keep birds from smoke-filled rooms. With their delicate lungs, even side-stream smoke can affect them. If you have many birds, have a sign up on your aviary door or just inside the front door. Then it isn't picking on an individual, and people will think why.

\* Cooking can make intense differences in temperature in a room. Try to have them in rooms with more even temperatures. Moreover, all the people in kitchens can stress a bird. Maybe even knock over a cage. Perhaps birds shouldn't be where you cook or eat, anyway. Some people are disturbed by the noise and perhaps allergic to feather dust. Cover pots and pans cooking on stove. Bird soufflé is not nice.

\* Understand what tasty treats you have. Guests will be tempted to feed chocolate, stuffing may harbor bacteria. Cider may be fermented, and ALCOHOL in any form is a no-no. Instead, make a pile of sweet potato cubes, cranberries, unsalted nuts or peanuts in the shell, and fresh vegetables like broccoli, even plain ole pasta, for guests to use to feed birds.

\* Birds can also get tangled up in tinsel and angel hair on trees and sharp needles can injure eyes or tender parts.

\* adapted from Lehigh Valley Bird Club newsletter Nov. 1993