

# Bird Safety: Holiday Safety Tips for Your Bird

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The holidays are a happy time of the year, but present special challenges to bird owners. Being an instinctive creature of habit, your bird might not cope well with the holiday season transformation in your household. The sights and sounds you enjoy might well disturb your pet. With attentive care, you can prevent or minimize the stress, as well as the negative behaviors that can result from changes.

## Sources of stress

- Any change can be perceived as a threat by your bird. Decorations. Trees and lights. Music. Foods. The distinctive sights, sounds, and smells of the holidays represent big changes, even if your bird never leaves his cage. In addition, many of the decorations could be potentially harmful to your bird (see below).
- Because of their unique respiratory system and other factors, birds have a higher sensitivity to odors and fumes. The strong fragrances of potpourri, scented candles, and cooking can be irritants. And remember, fumes from non-stick cooking surfaces such as [Teflon®](#) can be very toxic to birds.
- Birds are sensitive to changes in the photoperiod (the duration of daylight). Most birds need 10-12 hours of darkness for proper rest. The increased activity in your household during the holidays could keep it illuminated up to 18 hours a day, disrupting your pet's schedule and sleep.
- The coming and going of strangers and relatives can be very intimidating. Your bird will react to their voices and body language, and may be emotionally charged when approached.
- Because you are busy shopping, entertaining, or traveling, time with your pet may be limited. Play, feeding, and maintenance routines might be disrupted. Your bird might feel left out or even experience separation anxiety.



## Signs of stress

Birds that are stressed may show a variety of signs including:

- [Biting](#)
- [Screaming](#)
- [Feather picking](#)
- Eating less, or not at all
- Changes in the character or quantity of [droppings](#)

## Holiday stress relievers

Follow these tips to make a difference in your pet's stress level.

- Maintain feeding and hygiene routines. A treat here and there should be just that. Do not make big changes in diet during the holidays.
- Provide your pet toys and pacifiers to pass the time, especially if he shows any signs of feather plucking.
- A good cage cover is perhaps your most important tool to minimize stress during the holidays. You can use it to regulate light, protect your pet from guests and other pets, or give your pet a "time-out" if stressed.
- Limit your pet's exposure to strangers. This may mean relocating his cage, but this change may be less stressful than exposure to a roomful of loud party goers.
- If an accident does occur, be prepared. Make sure you have a [first aid kit](#) ready and veterinarian contact information where it is easy to find. Also, remain calm. Your bird can sense your emotions. If you react strongly, your bird will too.



## Potential holiday hazards

Pet accidents increase dramatically during the holidays. We do not mean to spoil your fun with these cautions, but hope to keep your holidays safe.

- Prevent exposure to electrical wires, which could cause dangerous burns or electrocution. Conceal them or use pet-proof covers. Otherwise, your pet may mistake them for a chew toy.



- Prevent access to holiday plants. Never allow your pet unsupervised access to poinsettia, holly (leaves and berries), mistletoe, or other plants commonly used to decorate during the holidays.



- A decorated tree is a magnet for birds, but unfortunately has the potential for causing problems. Do not allow your bird to have access to the tree. Tinsel, flocking, and artificial snow can be dangerous. The tree may also be coated with potentially harmful fire retardant, fertilizer, or insecticide. Larger decorating lights can become hot and cause burns. Some decorations may have small pieces that could be broken off and swallowed, causing digestive problems.
- Many of the foods we set out during the holidays can be toxic to pets, including chocolate (bakers, semi sweet, milk, dark), sugary cookies, salty snacks, and other favorites left out for nibbling and, of course, alcoholic drinks.
- Perfumes, potpourri, adhesives, glues, aerosol sprays, cleaning products, and of course, teflon, can all be toxic.
- Do not let your bird out of its cage when you have open flames in the house. Stoves, candles, and fireplaces always pose a serious threat.
- Do not tie ribbons on your pet or its cage, or leave them lying around. The inks and metals used in gift wraps and ornaments can be toxic. These items also pose choking and entanglement risks.
- Discourage guests from bringing their own dog or other pet into your home. If they do, understand that your pet and theirs are sure to be anxious. Keep them separated and do not relax your vigilance.

We hope these tips help you and your bird enjoy a happy, fun, and safe holiday season!