

Cats and Christmas - Tips For Cat Owners

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Although some cats may remain calm throughout Christmas, for the most part kittens and young cats, react because this is an exciting time. Their natural urge to explore is in high gear and the unusual activity of the house can also affect them. The decorated tree you worked so hard to achieve must look like toy heaven to your cat. You will be hard-pressed to stop her from exploring the tree - so instead, here are some tips to make that tree cat-safe. You can do this several different ways:

- * Make your Christmas tree as stable as possible. Chances are your cat will try to climb all over it sooner than later. Make sure that the base of the tree is heavier than the top, even after all the decorations are hanging from those branches! Read this article through for more technical information.

- * If you have a live tree, never let your cat drink from the water in the tree stand. Most people use aspirin or special chemicals to help preserve the tree and these can be deadly for cats! Even if you use pet safe preservatives, the tree itself releases toxic sap into the water, so you'd need to cover the water altogether and make it inaccessible to pets. You can also spray around the center of the tree skirt with lemon scented air freshener to deter your cat from wandering too close.

- * Avoid using tinsel, strings and hooks as part of your tree decorations. All are extremely dangerous to cats if swallowed. Fragile ornaments can be dangerous. Glass shreds on the carpet are a safety hazard to humans as well as felines - so keep all breakable ornaments out of your cat's reach.

- * Christmas foliage can be toxic! Holly, mistletoe, poinsettias, ivy and Christmas roses, as well as the Christmas tree itself are all harmful to pets. Holly and mistletoe can be fatal. Poinsettias and ivy bring on bad digestive upset and pine needles when swallowed can pierce internal organs. Try not to use ornamental plants or keep them well out of reach. Spray the lower branches of the tree with anti-chew plant spray. Sweep up any dead needles lying about and always be vigilant.

- * Remember candles though festive are a danger! If you burn candles, do so safely. A curious swish of a tail, can cause a burning candle to dump over and disaster can result. Inquisitive cats can burn their nose, ears paws or tail getting too close to a flame. Instead of spending the Holidays with your family, then you might end up spending it with your vet!

- * Christmas can be very stressful for some cats. All the changes in the decoration, having guests over or simply changing the familiar routine can bring on anxiety in your cat. Make sure you don't neglect her. Spend at least 15-20 minutes a day with her, grooming and playing interactive games. If you're having guests, your cat has to maintain some privacy in the house. Be sure the litter pan and the feeding area are far enough away from the festivities, so as not to disrupt her normal habits.

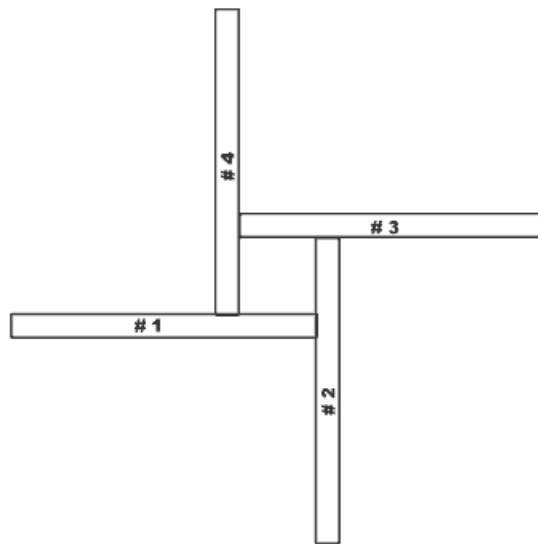
- * Rich Christmas food is not good for your cat! Make sure your cat keeps to her regular diet and doesn't feast on Christmas delicacies. Most of the foods we love are bad for cats and may cause upset stomach, vomiting and diarrhea. Instruct your visitors and guests not to feed your animals without your permission.

* Never give a kitten or a puppy as a Christmas gift! Let all your friends know that this is not an acceptable gift under any circumstance. To many cute kittens and puppies who begin their lives as Christmas gifts, end them shortly afterwards in the local shelter or on the streets. Getting a cat or a dog is a life-long commitment that should receive the special consideration it warrants.

Some technical tips on how to have a kitty proof stable Christmas Tree:

One-way is to take four boards 2x4's or similar. If your tree is three feet in diameter then you want to make the base 4 feet across. You want to make the base wider than the tree is in diameter. If the diameter of the trunk is 4 inches (the trunk not the tree or the limbs), you want to end up with a hole where the four boards will overlap and you want the hole to be 4 inches in diameter.

Place Board #1 on a flat surface. Take Board #2 place the end of Board #2 against the side of Board #1 so it overlaps 4 inches. In other words one board will stick out 4 inches then the other board. Take Board #3 place the end of Board #3 against the side of Board #2 approx. 4 inches from board #1. Now take Board #4 and place the end of it against the side of board #3 and resting it against board #1 (are you getting board yet?)



Fasten these together with screws or nails. Now you should have four boards sticking out with a 4-inch hole in the middle. The hole in the middle is where the trunk of the tree goes, and that gets fastened with screws or nails. Cover the four boards with a decorative cloth. Now this is a system that can't be used if you have a tree stand with water in it. If you have a tree stand, you need to figure out how to angle the boards to allow for the stand. Someone who is crafty in your life can help you there.

Another (easier) alternative is to hang a swag hook on the ceiling over the tree. Take fishing line and wrap the top of the branch securely with the line, then run it up to the hook and tie it off tightly. The fishing line stays virtually invisible and does not detract from the beauty of the tree. The tree stays snug in one place and if kitty crawls up, the tree will sway but not topple.