

Elaborate holiday feasts are risky business for pets

In the depths of winter I finally learned that within me there lay an invincible summer.-
Albert Camus

THANKSGIVING TIPS

Please clip this part of today's column, stick it on your refrigerator and read it again Thanksgiving morning. You'll be doing yourself and your pets a favor. Have a Happy Thanksgiving!

The following information has been provided for us by the kind folks at the Berkeley-East Bay Humane Society, 2700 Ninth St., Berkeley:

The Pet Perils of Thanksgiving:

Thanksgiving dinner is a cherished American tradition, but participation in that tradition by the nonhuman members of your household can be hazardous to their health.

Dr. Soto, veterinarian at the Berkeley-East Bay Humane Society, notes that the busiest day of the year at the BEBHS Animal Hospital is the day after Thanksgiving. She suggests the following cautions and tips to keep your pets healthy this holiday season:

- Turkey, stuffing, gravy and pumpkin pie are wonderful holiday foods, but are typically heavy on fat. Pets joining your holiday dinner are likely to suffer major stomach upsets, and can develop more serious problems. Save your animal companions (and yourself) holiday distress by not feeding them human food.
- Poultry bones are among the most dangerous things animals love to eat. They break easily, and shards from the bones can pierce throats, stomachs, and intestines. Be sure not to feed pets your leftover turkey carcass.
- Candy typically contains chemicals that are not safe for animal consumption. Chocolate, for instance, is poisonous to cats and dogs. Please do not feed candy to your pets.
- Don't underestimate your pet's agility. Cats are, of course, notorious leapers and climbers, but even large dogs, if properly motivated by forbidden treats, can get themselves up onto counters and tables. Secure leftovers out of the way of any possible acrobatic maneuvers.

Dr. Soto, DVM, and everyone at BEBHS wish you and your four-legged friends happy and healthy holidays this season. My feelings exactly, and the same to them.

(Go ahead, cut this out now and put it on your refrigerator door. I'll wait.)

BACKYARD VISITORS

Wednesday, Mike and Cecil Williams of Pleasant Hill reported seeing lots of pine siskins in the area. Curious, I asked if anyone else was spotting siskins, or any other new birds in their yards?

This response:

- Yes! The day after receiving the latest Wild Birds Unlimited newsletter reporting siskins, I looked closer at the flock of goldfinches on my giant thistle feeder and found that several of the "goldfinches" were actually pine siskins! I never would have noticed had I not been alerted to take a closer look. (Karin M., Berkeley)
- Saw a pine siskin at our thistle feeder this morning. Only one, but we'll keep watch. We're on Ridgewood Drive, Concord. (Bob)
- Ten pine siskins in Dublin! (H. K., Dublin)
- No pine siskins, but plenty of golden-crowned sparrows, Oregon juncos, towhees and goldfinches. (Sandy F., Clayton)

A FINAL NOTE

Lois, Karl, Tut, Newman, Lottie, Nikki and I are taking a Thanksgiving holiday all next week. I'll be back here in my regular spot to have a cup of morning coffee or tea with you on Nov. 30.

Every now and then, someone will write requesting that I reprint one of my columns from the past. I've shuffled through those requests and picked five columns to print here next week while I'm gone. I hope you find them interesting.

Again, Happy Thanksgiving. Don't eat too much ... actually, why not? See ya.

Gary's here Tuesday-Friday & Sunday; write Gary, c/o Times, P.O. Box 8099, Walnut Creek, CA 94596-8099; or garybug@infionline.net; 925-977-8582; Gary's new book is: "The Raccoon Next Door," by Heyday Books; old columns at www.contracostatimes.com, click on Columists, click on Gary.