



The Danger of Chocolate ***Holiday Gift Suggestions***

Along with the holidays comes those luscious boxes of chocolate. Although a delectable treat for us, it can be toxic or even fatal to dogs and cats. Chocolate may be an irresistible snack for a curious dog or mistakenly given to pets as treats.

Theobromine is the toxic compound found in chocolate. Signs may appear within 1 to 4 hours of eating chocolate and include vomiting, increased thirst, diarrhea, weakness, loss of balance, hyperexcitability, muscle spasms, seizures, coma, or death.

The toxicity of chocolate depends on the size of the pet, and the amount plus the type of chocolate ingested. For example: A potential toxic dose for a 44 pound dog is 3 oz of unsweetened cocoa, or 5 oz baking chocolate, 7oz semisweet chocolate, or 20oz milk chocolate.

The amount of theobromine in white chocolate or chocolate flavored dog treats is usually very small.

With ingestion of chocolate or any poisoning, call your Veterinarian or Emergency Veterinary Clinic immediately.

There are always family members or friends who have everything. If they own a pet there are plenty of options for you.

#1. Don't purchase a pet on impulse. Whether it is for you or a friend, owning a pet is a lifetime commitment, meaning 10-15 years in most cases, 70-80 years if it is a bird.

#2. For a responsible pet owner, a veterinary home-care book may be nice. A book should never be used to diagnose a medical problem or emergency. But a book can give good basic information that can be helpful and cost-effective in many cases.

#3. If your friend's pet doesn't have positive identifi-

cation, consider a tag or license, or a microchip. Positive pet ID is the best way to help in reuniting a lost pet with its owner.

#4. A toothbrush and toothpaste for the pet may be a nice gift. Regular brushing will help in reducing periodontal problems and bad breath.

#5. A kitty condo may be a safe haven for the cat of the house during these times of visitors for the holidays. The condos are the wooden structures covered in plush carpeting seen in pet stores.

#6 For the outdoor pets offer some shelter from the cold. Either a well-insulated dog house or a place in the garage.

How Cold Is It?

Seasonably cold weather is here. This means we need to give special attention to our pets. Here are some winterizing tips for your animal's comfort and well-being.

When the temperature reaches sub-zero, it is time to give the outdoor cat and dog a break and invite them in, even if it is the garage. This goes for Northern breeds like Siberian huskies as well as the medium-coated German shepherds and others in the region where they may not be acclimated to such extremes.

For short haired breeds, you might want to put them in a protective sweater before taking them outside. They will

get chilled quickly after leaving a warm house and walking out in low temperature weather. A sweater is not a substitute for shelter. They can get wet and actually remove heat from an animal.

A good rule of thumb is when you take your pooch outside to go to the bathroom, stay out with them. If you are cold enough to go inside, it probably is too cold for the pet to stay out much longer as well.

When you bring a pet in, wipe its paws and underside, making sure there are no ice balls clinging between the toes or on the sole of the foot that could cause frostbite. Other

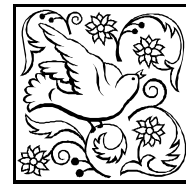
concerns are the risk of picking up rock salt or chemicals used to melt ice on sidewalks. A good wiping will help in preventing possible inflammation of the digestive tract from licking their feet.

If you opt not to bring the pet inside, consider a well built shelter with clean, dry and well insulated bedding. Plan to change the bedding often to prevent buildup of excess moisture brought in by the pet from every trip outside in the snow or rain. Equally critical position the opening, which should have a door flap, away from the direction in which snow, rain or wind usually comes.

Outdoor cats will sometimes seek warmth on a car engine. This means that serious damage can happen to the cat if it hasn't moved by the time you start the car. Before starting the engine, rap the hood a couple of times to chase them off.

Keep an eye on your pet's water bowl. If it is not heated, it will need to be changed several times daily when temperatures drop below freezing. Pet stores sell heated bowls which prevent the water from freezing.

Extra consideration can make the winter season enjoyable for any pet.



Holiday Hazards

The festive holidays can bring other unwanted danger to your pets. The following are some of the most common health concerns:

Poinsettias & Mistletoe

Poinsettias fill homes with color, and have received bad publicity in the past. In fact, poinsettias are not very toxic to pets. They have a milky sap that is an irritant to the mouth, but if signs develop they are usually mild. Mistletoe can be very toxic. It can cause vomiting, severe diarrhea, difficult breathing, shock and death within hours of ingestion.

Overindulgence

Well-intentioned family and friends may share holiday foods with pets causing the pet to develop a upset stomach or worse high fat foods can sometimes cause, pancreatitis (inflammation of the pancreas). To control excessive food intake by your pet let your guest "treat" the pets with the normal snacks you would always give.

Tinsel, Ribbon, and other Pretty Things

There is something about those shiny strands of Christmas tree décor, which drives kitties wild. Although the sight of your cat pawing at the tree may be cute, the ingestion

of tinsel can be deadly. Eating tinsel or other string-like items such as ribbon can cause serious damage to the intestine. One end can get stuck while the rest is pulled through the intestine. The muscle contractions of the intestine may cause the ribbon or tinsel to saw through the intestinal wall. If not caught in time, infection of the belly cavity develops and the prognosis for recovery becomes poor. Pets with this condition quickly become ill with signs that can include vomiting, diarrhea, depression, belly pain and sometimes fever.

Holiday Lights

Decorative lights are another attraction for pets to chew on. Both indoor and outdoor lights should be carefully examined to ensure safety for your pets. Check for bite marks, loose or frayed wires, use grounded 3-prong extension cords and strictly follow manufacture's guidelines. Electrical shock from cord biting can cause burns, difficulty breathing, abnormal heart rhythm, loss of consciousness, and death.

Call your Veterinarian or Emergency Veterinary Clinic immediately if your pet has been injured with any of these hazards.



Santa and Friends

We want to thank everyone who participated in the Santa photos with pets program. This year we had over 70 pets attend. We had a wide range of cats and dogs. Santa was happy to announce that there were no little accidents in his lap. Hope to see you next year!

Kid's Corner

When Santa Claus Comes

Author Unknown

A good time is coming, I wish it were here,
The very best time in the whole of the year,
I'm counting each day on my fingers and thumbs
the weeks that must pass before Santa Claus comes.

Then when the first snowflakes begin to come down,
And the wind whistles sharp and the branches are brown,
I'll not mind the cold, though my fingers it numbs,
For it brings the time nearer when Santa Claus comes.

