

Are You Poisoning Your Pet With Potentially Deadly Treats?

The spring holidays are approaching, and whether you are celebrating Easter or Passover, you should not allow your pets to enjoy any of the traditional snacks that usually are plentiful during these holiday celebrations. Feeding your pet any kind of food that is not part of its normal diet can be very detrimental to his or her well-being. Unlike people, who enjoy variety in our diets, a pet does best with a consistent, unchanging diet. A rapid change in an animal's diet can cause gastrointestinal distress, which can lead to a mess you have to clean up on the carpet. It can also lead to increasingly worse symptoms that may trigger explosive vomiting and diarrhea or even become life threatening.

Health Complications

Pancreatitis is a common complication when a pet eats something that its digestive system cannot handle. This serious condition can lead to hospitalization and even death. Definitely avoid giving your pet anything greasy or spicy, but keep in mind that even simpler foods or treats also can lead to serious problems.

Deadly Sweets

One of the most toxic snacks a pet can eat is chocolate, which contains theobromine, an ingredient similar to caffeine, which is poisonous to pets. Even a modest amount of chocolate can be lethal to a small pet. Theobromine releases epinephrine, which causes serious changes in a pet's heart rate.

Signs & Symptoms

Signs of chocolate toxicity include vomiting, diarrhea, hyperactivity, depression, and possibly seizures. While dark chocolate and baking chocolate contain the highest and most

dangerous amounts of theobromine and are, therefore, the most toxic, even milk chocolate can make your pet sick. Whether your pet just suffers an upset stomach or becomes dangerously poisoned depends upon the amount of chocolate eaten, as well as the size and weight of the animal.

Every Minute Counts!

If you know for certain that your pet has ingested chocolate, immediately contact your local veterinarian or pet emergency center for further instructions. Time is critical under these circumstances, especially if dark chocolate was ingested. Most likely, you will be instructed to bring your pet in for treatment without delay. Medical care for chocolate ingestion can include inducing vomiting and other treatments to reduce the absorption of the remaining chocolate in the animal's system. Intravenous fluids may also be necessary to flush the system and rehydrate your pet.

Hidden Dangers

Remember that there are other products that contain theobromine, as well. They include cola products, cocoa beans and tea. Keep all of these products and any type of chocolate away from your pets. Enlighten family members and visiting guests as well that chocolate is not a treat for pets. It can, indeed, be fatal.