

## “Common Christmas Poisons in Cats & Dogs”

### Chocolate

Although a treat for humans, chocolate can be lethal to dogs. Chocolate contains a chemical called “theobromine”. Its levels vary greatly with the chocolates cocoa content and this has a direct effect on how toxic it can be if ingested by dogs.

Signs are vomiting, diarrhoea, tremors and seizures following ingestion. Severe cases can be fatal.

Treatment is to induce vomiting promptly and supportive nursing care. Prognosis is favourable if only a small amount is consumed and rapid treatment is received.

During the festive season ensure chocolate is out of your pets reach and remember to hang chocolate decorations high up on your Christmas tree!

### Raisins, grapes, sultanas and currants

These have a significant toxic potential in dogs.

Grape toxicity results in acute renal (kidney) failure. All parts of the fruit are poisonous to dogs and even a small quantity eaten should be taken seriously.

Signs to look out for would include vomiting within 2 hours of ingestion, leading to diarrhoea, lethargy and increased thirst. Within 24 hours to several days, signs of acute renal failure maybe apparent.

Prompt treatment is important. If your dog does eat any, make them vomit and seek veterinary advice.

Ensure grapes and fruit cakes are kept out of the reach of your dog.

### Tinsel & Ribbon

With Christmas presents being wrapped and tree’s being decorated, take care with your pets. Cats and dogs like playing with tinsel and ribbon. It is not un-common for cats to eat long pieces of ribbon!

If you think your pet has eaten any contact your vet as soon as possible. An exploratory operation maybe needed to remove it from their stomach.

## **Bones & Table scraps**

At Christmas time don't be tempted to feed your pet bones. Turkey and chicken bones especially splinter when chewed. Bones may splinter and cause damage on their way to the stomach. They may cause a blockage, vomiting and a sore abdomen. This can result in an operation needed to have them removed.

String from meat joints can also cause an obstruction if eaten.

Feeding food to pets that they are not usually given can result in tummy upsets. Vomiting and diarrhoea may occur.

Several foods taken from your plate maybe toxic!

Onions contain a substance that destroys red blood cells and can cause anaemia. Garlic contains a similar substance in a lesser amount.

## **Foreign bodies**

If your dog is known for being a "chewer", never leave him/her unsupervised with toys. Parts of toys can be swallowed and can cause blockages.

During the festive season beware of wine bottle corks. These are not always passed out the other end if swallowed whole! This may result in an exploratory operation to remove it.

## **Lilies**

It is known that all parts of lilies are toxic to cats.

Cats like to explore and brush against things in their home. Brushing against them could mean pollen falling on their coat ready to be ingested later when they groom themselves.

Signs of poisoning include; vomiting, anorexia, respiratory problems, depression, seizures and swollen paws or face within a few hours following ingestion. Can result in kidney failure. Cats can survive lily poisoning but maybe left with renal (kidney) problems and pancreatitis.

## “Other Common Poisons in Cats & Dogs”

### Rodent poisons (“Rodenticides”)

Rat poison is a rodenticide containing “warfarin”. Warfarin is a chemical that disrupts the blood's ability to clot.

Symptoms are often observed in a dog that has eaten rat poison, these include;

Pale gums, weakness, bloody nose, blood in the urine/faeces, coughing up blood, internal bleeding, seizures and muscle tremors.

Seek veterinary advice immediately!

### Slug/Snail pellets

Metaldehyde is a common active ingredient in slug/snail baits or pellets.

Signs include being unsteady on their feet and twitching, rapid deterioration, convulsions and possibly respiratory failure.

Metaldehyde poisoning is extremely serious and is usually fatal unless immediate veterinary treatment is sought.

### Anti-freeze – “Ethylene Glycol”

Anti-freeze (Ethylene Glycol) is very poisonous to cats.

Due to its “sweet” taste they find it very appealing to drink.

Early signs seen after ingestion are; vomiting, mild to severe depression, wobbliness, twitching, rapid eye movement, head tremors and increased thirst. In severe cases kidney disease. Symptoms are almost always of sudden onset. Treatment by a vet is needed as quickly as possible.

### Paracetamol

Paracetamol is commonly used in people for its pain killing properties. Whilst these are occasionally used in dogs, accidental overdose as a result of your dog finding a packet and eating them requires prompt action.

Paracetamol can have a cumulative toxic effect if smaller repeated doses are given; for example, if an owner is home-medicating their dog without seeking veterinary advice.

Paracetamol is metabolised by the liver and toxic doses can result in liver failure.

Signs of paracetamol poisoning can be; lethargy, vomiting, difficulty in breathing and swelling of the face and limbs. Seizures and inco-ordination can be expected. As acute liver failure develops, jaundice and abdominal pain will be evident. Coma and death in severe cases can result.

## **Permethrin**

Most common poisoning in cats is permethrin poisoning.

This chemical is found in many flea treatment products and poisoning usually occurs when people put a “dog” product containing permethrin on a cat by mistake. Cats take in the permethrin when grooming.

This causes severe trembling, salivation and seizures and can lead to death.

Wash off product if possible and seek veterinary advice immediately.