

Pawsitive Press

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Pet Poisons

By: Wade Matthews, D.V.M.

Both dogs and cats explore their world with their mouths. We see a lot of problems with pets ingesting things that are not meant to be eaten. They do not have the cognitive function to think about the consequences of their actions. Their motto is “if it looks or smells good eat it.”

One of the most common poisons that we see in practice is ethylene glycol (anti-freeze) intoxication. This liquid has a sweet taste to it and pets love it. The chemical that lowers the freezing point of your radiator causes havoc with your pet’s kidneys after it makes them look like they are drunk. They will stumble and seem demented and sometimes will have vomiting, diarrhea or seizures. When ingested it causes the liver to change the alcohol in the anti-freeze to a solution that ultimately ends up as oxalic acid and aldehyde which are very



toxic to the kidneys. The treatment for the disease if we can diagnose it soon enough is to give them intra-venous ethanol. That is why we keep a bottle of vodka at the clinic, for anti-freeze treatment only of course. This treatment gives the liver something else to do so it can’t work on the anti-freeze and the poison is excreted.

Some other common poisons that are caused by well-meaning owners when they give their pet a “treat” are xylitol, chocolate and grapes. Xylitol is a sugar substitute that is used in gum and candies. It causes low blood sugar in dogs which can turn into seizures and death, it does not cause problems in cats. If it says “sugar free” don’t give it to your dog or cat to be safe. Most all homes have chocolate in the form of candy or baking items. It contains

methylxanthines, theobromine and caffeine which if ingested in high enough concentration will cause increase heart rate, increase breathing rate, increase blood pressure and life threatening heart arrhythmias. Milk chocolate has much less poisonous than cocoa powder or Baker’s and dark chocolate, but to be safe no chocolate is safest. Grapes cause the same type of clinical signs as anti-freeze, but the exact chemical is still in question. Thankfully both grapes, raisins and chocolate need to be eaten in fairly large amounts to cause life-threatening problems, but please do not feel safe about knowingly given them to your pet.

Many of our owners have medical conditions of their own and need to take medicine for them. Many of these drugs we use in veterinary medicine, but a dogs mentality when something is dropped on the floor is “eat it fast before the owner takes away my treat.” There is a tremendous size difference in the vast majority of our pets and their owners, so dosing is quite different and at too high a dose most all medicines can cause problem. Always read the label on medication to verify

Pet Poison Cont'd

that the right specie is getting the right drug.

When kids return to school, there is a surge of back-to-school related poisonings according to the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center. Items in children’s backpacks and lunchboxes can be toxic to pets. Some of the top lunchbox and backpack toxins include macadamia nuts, onions, moldy food, ADHD medications, Albuterol inhalers, over the counter medications such as NSAIDs and acetaminophen. In fact, even items such as colored pencils can be dangerous for your pets. If eaten, a colored pencil could put a pet at risk for a foreign body obstruction. Some art supplies that carry a CL (cautionary label) seal may present a toxic risk to pets as well, so be sure to check your art supplies.

Veterinarians are very helpful in answering questions about most of the common poisons in pets and if they run into one they are not familiar with there are a few” pet poison control hotlines” that for a small fee will have a board certified toxicologist help them with the specific problem. The best way to avoid problems is for the owners to make a deal with their pets to not take each other’s food or medications!

<p>ALCOHOL COMA DEATH INTOXICATION</p>	<p>AVOCADO CONTAINS PERSIN: VOMITING DIARRHEA</p>	<p>RAISINS CURRANTS KIDNEY FAILURE</p>
<p>COOKED BONES STOMACH LACERATIONS</p>	<p>WALNUTS MACADAMIAS NERVOUS SYSTEM AND MUSCLE DAMAGE</p>	<p>ONIONS GARLIC TOO MUCH: BLOOD CELL DAMAGE ANEMIA</p>
<p>DAIRY TOO MUCH: DIARRHEA</p>	<p><i>the world's</i> MOST DANGEROUS FOODS FOR DOGS</p>	
<p>MUSHROOMS SOME VARIETIES: SHOCK DEATH</p>	<p>GRAPES KIDNEY FAILURE</p>	<p>FATTY FOODS TOO MUCH: PANCREATITIS</p>
<p>CAFFEINE VOMITING DIARRHEA TOXIC TO HEART & NERVOUS SYSTEM</p>	<p>XYLITOL (GUM, CANDY ETC.) LIVER FAILURE HYPOGLYCEMIA DEATH</p>	<p>CHOCOLATE TOXIC TO HEART & NERVOUS SYSTEM DEATH</p>
<p>MEDICATIONS (TYLENOL, ADVIL ETC.) KIDNEY FAILURE GI ULCERS</p>	<p>If you think your dog ate something dangerous, CALL YOUR VET or: ASPCA POISON CONTROL HOTLINE (888) 426-4435 NATIONAL PET POISON HELPLINE (800) 213-6680</p>	
<p>illustration by LILI CHIN layout by DESIGN LAB CREATIVE STUDIO</p>		

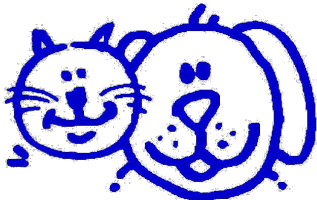
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