

Take Care this Christmas



While putting up your Christmas decorations this year, spare a thought that eye-catching tinsel and baubles are not left lying about, as your pet may find them irresistible, but if swallowed, they can lead to blockages or perforation of the intestinal tract. Also conceal any exposed cables for fairy lights etc, as some dogs may take a particular liking to chewing the cable.



Poinsettias and Amaryllis are popular at Christmas, but their red glow isn't just appealing to humans, many dogs will find these plants irresistible too. It's therefore important that these plants are kept out of the dogs reach, as they are poisonous and can cause mouth or stomach irritation from just eating a small part of the plant. Mistletoe can also be dangerous, the berries, in particular, can be even more toxic than poinsettias.



Dogs might find it hard to leave you in peace while you tuck into Christmas dinner, but don't feel guilt ridden into handing over some of your dinner! Poultry bones in particular may become lodged in the dog's throat or they may perforate the intestinal tract. In addition, fatty foods can cause dogs to have digestion problems and may lead to gastrointestinal upsets.

Even simple foods such as raisins and grapes, should not be given to dogs as they can be toxic and in some cases have caused acute kidney failure.

Chocolate can also be fatal to dogs. Chocolate is highly toxic to dogs and if eaten in great quantity could even kill. Not many people are aware that chocolate contains a chemical called theobromine, which although harmless to humans is potentially deadly for dogs. Theobromine is contained in higher concentration in plain varieties of chocolate, and lower in white chocolate.



Toxic doses vary according to the size of dog and cocoa solid content of the chocolate, but as a guideline we estimate that 50g of plain chocolate could be enough to kill a dog such as a Yorkshire Terrier. In an average size dog, such as a Collie, around 415g of plain chocolate could be fatal.

Although the majority of families and their canine friends will enjoy an incident free Christmas, it is very important that we highlight the potential dangers that surround dogs at Christmas and whilst a dog being poisoned by chocolate is rare, there are reported cases every year.

If any of your festive treats are missing and you suspect the dog has a part to play, symptoms you should look for include vomiting, a sore abdomen, excessive thirst, excitability, drooling, slow heart rate and in the later stages, convulsions. If your dog is displaying any of these signs then immediately contact the vet. The good news is that, if caught early enough, the symptoms of theobromine poisoning can be treated.

Any change in diet can cause upset stomachs, so the best treat for your dog is an extra dog biscuit, it can even be wrapped up in rice paper to make it more fun. The best long term treat is a food toy, such as a food cube.



So, we advise if you want to give your four legged friend a tasty treat this Christmas you should try any of the healthy treats made by pet food manufacturers with dogs in mind – and eat all the chocolate yourself!