

Holiday Health Concerns

(As published in the Pinscher Patter, Dec 2005)

COTTON BALL REMEDY

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What do you do if your puppy (or mischievous older dog) gets into your holiday decorations and eats some of the glass ornaments? This potentially lethal mishap can darken even the brightest holiday season.

The Procedure

Before the holiday go to a pharmacy and buy a box of cotton balls. Be sure that you get pure COTTON balls... not the cosmetic puffs that are made from man-made fibers. Also, buy a quart of half-and-half coffee cream and put it in the freezer. Should your dog eat glass ornaments. Defrost the half-and-half and pour some in a bowl. Dip cotton balls into the cream and feed them to your dog.

Dogs under 10 pounds should eat two balls which you have first torn into small pieces. Dogs 10-50 pounds should eat 3-5 balls and larger dogs should eat 5-7. You may feed larger dogs an entire ball at once. Dogs seem to really like these strange treats and eat them readily.

As the cotton works its way through the digestive tract it will find all the glass pieces and wrap itself around them. Even the teeniest shards of glass will be caught and wrapped in the cotton fibers and the cotton will protect the intestines from damage by the glass. Your dog's stools will be really weird for a few days and you will have to be careful to check for fresh blood or a tarry appearance to the stool. If either of the latter symptoms appear you should rush your dog to the vet for a checkup but, in most cases, the dogs will be just fine.

An Actual experience: I can personally vouch for the cotton ball treatment. While I was at the vet waiting for him to return from lunch a terrified woman ran in with a litter of puppies who had demolished a wooden crate along with large open staples. The young vet had taken x-rays which did show each of the puppies had swallowed several open staples. He was preparing them for surgery when my wonderful vet came in and said no surgery. I watched him wet several cotton balls, squeeze out the water and pop them down their throats. Within 24 hours every staple was accounted for. This was a lesson I learned in the mid-1960's and have had to use several times on my brats. I wet the cotton balls and smear on some liverwurst and they bolt it down and ask for more. The cotton always comes out with the object safely embedded.

ATTENTION PET OWNERS - BREAD DOUGH A NO-NO

As the holidays descend upon us, there'll be many cooks in the kitchen---but don't spoil your pet by giving him bread dough.

According to Jill A. Richardson, DVM, of the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center (APCC), when bread dough is ingested, an animal's body heat causes the dough to rise in the stomach. As alcohol is produced during the rising process, the dough expands. Pet's who've eaten bread dough may experience abdominal pain, bloat, vomiting, disorientation and depression.

"We once had a case in which a Labrador Retriever ate several rolls that the owner had placed on the oven to rise. The owner didn't think much of this, and was just upset that the dog ate part of the holiday feast," Richardson recalls. "A few hours later, the owner noticed the dog looked very lethargic. He was resistant to move, incoordinated and was retching." As the symptoms increased, the owner brought him to an emergency clinic, which contacted the APCC. Unfortunately, the dog's stomach was so severely distended that the only option at the time was to surgically remove the dough; he was also treated for alcohol toxicosis, caused by the fermentation of the dough. The Labrador was kept at the clinic for the weekend and recovered completely. Although he had ingested quite a bit of dough, an animal needs to eat only a small amount to cause a problem, because bread dough can rise many times its size. Please take care not to let Fluffy or Fido in the kitchen unsupervised when you're baking this holiday season-especially if you've got a professional chowhound who's always on the lookout for food.

POTENTIAL POISONS AROUND THE HOME

Chocolate, tea, coffee, cola: Chocolate contains a chemical, theobromine, which is poisonous to all dogs. Different dogs react differently to it. Theobromine can trigger epileptic seizures, fatal cardiac irregularity, can irritate the gastrointestinal tract and cause internal bleeding which can kill the dog within a do or so. Theobromine is also present in differing amounts in different kinds of chocolate. Milk chocolate has 44-66 mg/oz; dark chocolate 450 mg/oz; and baking/bitter chocolate or cocoa powder varies from 150-600 mg/oz.

Theobromine will stay in the bloodstream between 14-20 hours. It goes back into the bloodstream through the stomach lining and takes a long time for the liver to filter out. If your dog has eaten chocolate, contact your vet immediately. Many dogs react adversely to the chemicals in tea, coffee and cola. The best defense is prevention. Keep all such products where your dog can't get a them.

Onions: Especially raw onions, should be avoided as they can trigger fatal hemolytic anemia in dogs.

Potatoes: Poisonings have occurred both in dogs and people from the solanum alkaloids

found in green sprouts and green potato skins which occurs when the tubers are exposed to sunlight during growth or after harvest. Cooked, mashed potatoes are fine to eat, but keep the raw ones away from your dog.

Turkey skin: It has been linked to acute pancreatitis in dogs and must be avoided because of its high fat content. Never feed your dog a high fat content meat unless you defat it first.

Antifreeze Poisoning: Each year thousands of pets die from exposure to ethylene glycol, the active ingredient in auto antifreeze. The sweet taste lures them in and just a lick or two can cause death. Early treatment is critical to try and prevent fatal kidney failure. Antifreeze is highly toxic. Be sure to keep your pets away from it. Anytime a dog or cat is left in a garage, the potential for death by antifreeze poisoning is present. If you see a greenish liquid in your garage or on the street, keep your pet away and clean it up thoroughly.

In addition to offering information online at <http://www.napcc.aspca.org>, the APCC also runs an emergency hotline 1-888-4-ANI-HELP. Telephone assistance 24/7.