General advice

- Do not feed your pet leftovers or mouldy food.
- Dispose of unwanted and mouldy food promptly.
- keep dustbin lids firmly closed to prevent access to discarded food.
- Prevent access to compost heaps as there is a risk they will contain mouldy plant material.
- Put your shopping away as soon as you get home.
- Store foods securely to prevent access.
- Prevent children from sharing their food with their pet.
- If in doubt about a particular foodstuff – do not feed it to your pet!

What to do if you think your pet has been poisoned

EMERGENCY ADVICE

- **Call Animal PoisonLine on 01202 509000 even if your pet is showing no signs to find out whether a trip to the vet is required.**
- **Remove your pet from the source of poison.**
- **Do not try to make your pet vomit – NEVER give salt water.**
- **Collect the poison and take a sample/ container with you if you are advised to take your pet to the vet practice.**

Animal POISONLine 24hr advice for owners

01202 509000

www.animalpoisonline.co.uk
24 hours a day (charges apply)

COVER PHOTO BY JIM LIGHTFOOT - FLICKR

Animal PoisonLine is run by the VPIS, the UK's only animal poison centre, which has provided advice to vets on the management of poisoning in animals for over 25 years.

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HARMFUL FOODS

Overview

Many human foodstuffs can be harmful to pets. It is important to be aware of the potential food hazards that may be available in the home.

CHOCOLATE AND CAFFEINE

Chocolate contains a chemical very similar to caffeine which dogs do not tolerate well. White chocolate generally does not represent a risk but milk chocolate and even a relatively small amount of dark chocolate can cause agitation, excitability, tremors, convulsions and problems with the heart. This is a particular hazard during Christmas, Easter and around Valentine's Day. Chocolate-covered coffee beans are also harmful.

ONIONS, LEEKS AND GARLIC

Onions, garlic, leeks, shallots and chives all belong to the same group of plants. They can cause toxicity even when cooked. Initially there can be gastrointestinal signs with vomiting and diarrhoea but the main effect is damage to red blood cells resulting in anaemia. This may not be apparent until several days after ingestion.

GRAPES AND THEIR DRIED FRUITS (SULTANAS, RAISINS, CURRANTS)

Grapes and their dried products (currants, sultanas and raisins) are toxic to dogs. Ingestion of even a small quantity can cause severe kidney failure. This will also include food items that contain dried fruits such as Christmas pudding, Christmas cake and mince pies. Chocolate-coated raisins represent an additional risk of chocolate toxicity.

ALCOHOL

Dogs may help themselves to any alcohol left unattended, including wine and liqueurs, and it can cause similar signs in pets as it does in their owners when drunk in excess. Dogs can become wobbly and drowsy and in severe cases there is a risk of low body temperature, low blood sugar and coma.

MACADAMIA NUTS

Macadamia nuts can cause lethargy, increased body temperature, tremor, lameness and stiffness in dogs. Chocolate-coated macadamia nuts may also cause chocolate poisoning.

XYLITOL

This is a sweetener present in some sugar-free gums and sweets. It can also be used as a sugar replacement in baking. Xylitol can cause low blood sugar and liver damage in dogs.

BREAD DOUGH

Ingestion of uncooked bread dough can cause a swollen abdomen, vomiting and obstruction of the gut. There is also a risk of alcohol intoxication because the yeast in the dough produces ethanol.

SALT (SODIUM CHLORIDE)

Ingestion of salt such as table salt or dishwasher salt can cause non-specific signs with vomiting, lethargy and thirst. In severe cases there may be convulsions, coma and kidney failure.

MOULDY FOOD

Mouldy food can also be hazardous due the presence of toxic substances produced by the mould. Ingestion of mouldy food can cause vomiting, tremors, a high body temperature and convulsions.