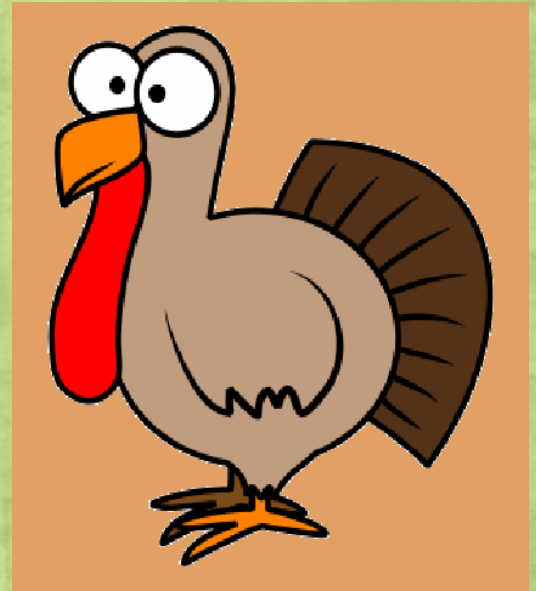


Holiday Health Hazards



Keeping Your Pet Safe During the Holiday Season

Unity Animal Hospital
unityanimalhospital.com
1 N. Providence Road
Wallingford, PA 19086
© November, 2014

Overview

- Toxic foods
 - Fatty foods: pancreatitis
 - Chocolate
 - ...and more
- Toxic plants
- Household hazards
 - Foreign bodies
 - ...and more
- One last reminder



Pancreatitis: physiology

- Normal pancreas: releases digestive enzymes into the intestine to break down food
- Pancreatitis: inflammation of the pancreas due to inappropriate release of digestive enzymes
- Causes of pancreatitis:
 - Consumption of fatty foods
 - Go easy on the Thanksgiving turkey!
 - Idiopathic
 - Diabetes alters an animal's fat metabolism and predisposes to pancreatitis
 - Trauma
 - Pancreatic tumors



Pancreatitis: signs, diagnosis, treatment

- Signs: Vomiting, painful abdomen, anorexia
- Diagnosis: cPLI: blood test that measures pancreatic lipase, an enzyme whose release into the blood occurs with pancreatitis
- Treatment:
 - Depends on severity, which ranges from very mild to life-threatening
 - Usually involves fluid therapy (to address dehydration), withholding of food (to rest the pancreas), careful introduction of a low-fat diet, pain medication, and anti-nausea medication
 - Hospitalization may be necessary

Chocolate: mechanism of toxicity

- Methylxanthines (theobromine and caffeine) are the toxic component of cocoa
 - Cause increased amounts of circulating epinephrine, acting as a nervous system stimulant
 - Interfere with calcium storage, causing muscle contraction



Chocolate: signs of toxicity

- GI signs
 - Vomiting
 - Diarrhea
 - Anorexia
- Pancreatitis
- Cardiac and nervous system signs
 - Hyperactivity
 - High heart rate, cardiac arrhythmias
 - Twitching
 - Seizures



Chocolate: levels of toxicity

- Different types of chocolate contain different levels of methylxanthines
 - Unsweetened cocoa powder most toxic: 800 mg methylxanthines per ounce chocolate
 - Unsweetened baking chocolate: 450 mg per ounce
 - Dark chocolate: 150 mg per ounce
 - Milk chocolate least toxic: 65 mg per ounce

Chocolate: levels of toxicity

- Higher levels of methylxanthines cause more severe toxicity
 - <20 mg/kg usually safe
 - 1 oz. of dark chocolate or 2 oz. milk chocolate in a 25# dog
 - >60 mg/kg causes severe signs (cardiac arrhythmias, seizures)
 - >5 oz. dark chocolate or >12 oz. milk chocolate in a 25# dog
 - >1 oz. Baker's chocolate in a 15# dog, >3 oz. Baker's chocolate in a 50# dog



Chocolate: treatment for toxicity

- Induce vomiting
- Activated charcoal
- Fluid replacement
- Anti-nausea medications
- EKG monitoring and anti-arrhythmics if cardiac signs present
- Valium if seizing

More toxic holiday foods to avoid

- Alcohol
- Grapes and raisins
 - Can cause kidney failure by idiosyncratic mechanism
- Yeast dough
- Xylitol (sugar-free sweetener)
 - Causes insulin release, leading to hypoglycemia and liver failure
- Macadamia nuts
 - Cause weakness, vomiting, tremors
- Onions and garlic
- REMEMBER: Santa's cookies are for Santa! If you leave cookies out, make sure they're somewhere your dog can't reach! And be careful about putting food under the tree, even if it's wrapped!

Toxic Plants

- Lilies
 - Cause kidney failure in cats
- Mistletoe
 - Causes GI upset
 - Can potentially cause cardiac problems if large amount ingested (methylxanthines)
- Holly
 - Causes GI upset
- Poinsettia
 - Not actually toxic
 - Ingesting large amounts can cause mild GI upset



Household hazards

- Foreign bodies
 - Tinsel, ribbons
- Potential injuries
 - Electric cords
 - Unsecured Christmas trees
- Toxins
 - Christmas tree water
 - Batteries



Final Reminder

- Holidays are stressful!
 - Create a safe space for your pet to go if commotion, visitors, the doorbell, etc. make him nervous.
 - Be careful about closing doors when there is a lot of traffic in and out of the house.
 - Microchip!



Questions?

Happy Holidays from Unity Animal Hospital!

