

Foods Toxic To Dogs And Cats

To maintain a healthy pet it is important NOT to feed the following:

Human food ONLY diets – human nutritional requirements are different to those of our pets. Making your own home made diet for your dog or cat is very costly and requires over 50 ingredients to ensure pets are receiving a complete balanced diet not deficient in essential nutrients. Puppies and kittens raised on human food alone may suffer calcium deficiency, bone growth abnormalities, stunted growth or a poor immune system, making them susceptible to disease. Human food is acceptable as a treat only.

Meat ONLY diets – severe calcium deficiencies can result from feeding meat only diets to both dogs and cats, especially puppies and kittens. Growing animals require calcium for healthy bone growth (puppies and kittens have a higher calcium requirement than adult dogs and cats). Calcium deficiency may result in abnormal bone growth, increases the susceptibility to fractures and may be very painful (premium commercial diets provide balanced calcium levels). Milk is NOT a suitable supplement for calcium in an unbalanced diet. Calcium supplementation is NOT required in pets fed a balanced diet but may be required for those pets where meat makes up a large portion of their diet. DO NOT supplement calcium before consulting with one of our vets as too much calcium in growing animals is also dangerous.

Vegetarian and dog food diets in CATS – cats have an absolute need for taurine and arginine (two essential amino acids found in meat) in every meal. Unlike dogs, cats have a limited ability to synthesise taurine and arginine on their own so are strict carnivores. Dog foods and vegetables contain insufficient amounts of these amino acids to satisfy the requirements of cats. Signs of taurine deficiency include foetal abnormalities, delayed growth and development, degenerative eye problems and heart disease. Arginine deficiency can result in an accumulation of life threatening levels of ammonia.

Cooked bones – cooked bones splinter very easily and may get caught in the mouth, throat or intestines. The retrieval of lodged bones may involve an anaesthetic and surgery – this can be expensive! Cooked bones are also more likely to result in constipation than raw bones, and cause pain on passage through the intestines.

Chocolate – dogs often like the taste of chocolate, but it may be toxic if consumed in the wrong amount. The theobromine and caffeine in chocolate affects the cardiovascular and neurological system of dogs potentially causing seizures and death. 50g of dark chocolate is enough to poison a 10kg dog. Cats can also suffer from chocolate toxicity.

Onions / Chives / Garlic / Shallots (cooked or raw - including those on pizza and in left-over's) – are toxic to red blood cells and may cause a severe life threatening anaemia in both dogs and cats.

Large amounts of liver and cod liver oil – liver contains large amounts of vitamin A. Spinal abnormalities, blindness and other bone deformities may result if large amounts of vitamin A are consumed. Liver treats are perfectly safe if kept as treats and not used as the staple diet of your pet.

Meat containing preservatives – some pet meats (those NOT purchased from a butcher) e.g. kangaroo meat, contain large amounts of sulphur dioxide as a preservative. In large quantities this may cause vitamin B1 deficiency.

Pet meats should NOT be fed as a major portion of your pet's diet.

Grapes and sultanas – recently implicated as causing acute kidney failure in dogs due to an unknown toxin.

Macadamia nuts – are poisonous to dogs potentially causing muscle tremors, weakness and depression.

Excessively fatty food – can result in a painful potentially life threatening inflammation of the pancreas known as pancreatitis. This results in abdominal pain, lethargy, reduced appetite and vomiting.

Mouldy Foods - mouldy foods may contain mycotoxins. These can induce muscle tremors, loss of coordination, and convulsions. They can also cause severe liver damage and sometimes results in death.

Bread Dough - Ingestion of bread dough can be life-threatening to dogs. The heat of an animal's body will cause the dough to rise in the stomach. Ethanol is produced during the rising process and the dough may expand several times its original size. Signs seen with bread dough ingestion may include severe abdominal pain, bloating, vomiting, loss of coordination, and depression. Surgery is often required to remove the dough.

PLANTS TOXIC TO DOGS AND CATS

Lilies – these flowers may result in acute renal failure and subsequent death if inadvertently consumed by cats. Be sure to remove lilies from indoor flower arrangements and do not plant lilies in your garden if your cats spend time outdoors. All parts of the flower are considered toxic and disease can result simply from your cat grooming pollen off a contaminated coat or chewing the leaves without eating any of it.

Aloe Vera – when the Aloe Vera plant is consumed it can cause vomiting, diarrhoea and abdominal pain. Shampoos containing Aloe Vera (such as Aloveen) are quite safe, however direct application of Aloe Vera oil/extract to the skin is NOT considered safe.

Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow Plant - *Brunfelsia australis* or *grandiflora* – This plant has emerged as a very common cause of seizures due to toxicity in dogs (particularly in the Wollongong and Shellharbour areas). All parts of the plant are potentially toxic but the leaves and flower heads appear to be particularly tasty to dogs and may be consumed in large quantities. Signs of toxicity include drooling, gagging, agitation and anxiety potentially progressing to life threatening convulsions.

Marijuana – consumption of the leaves of a marijuana plant, 'hash cookies' or simply passive inhalation of smoke can result in toxicity to dogs. This can be a frightening experience for dogs. Signs include dilated pupils, muscle tremors, loss of coordination, hyperactivity and hypersalivation. Signs can progress to bradycardia (a slowed heart rate), hypersensitivity and seizures.

OTHER TOXICITIES

Lead – lead (found in curtain weights, fishing sinkers etc) and lead based paints can cause disease of the gastrointestinal and nervous system resulting in vomiting, diarrhoea or seizures if consumed by pets. Grooming lead based paint dust off a cats coat is a frequent cause of toxicity when renovating older residences.

Alcohol – Dogs may be attracted to the smell and taste of alcohol. Take care not to leave alcoholic beverages within reach of pets (by the pool, BBQ or on the floor by the lounge whilst watching a football game). Bottles of alcohol used as an antiseptic are also dangerous. Signs of toxicity can develop within an hour of ingestion and include vomiting, incoordination, disorientation and low body temperature. Consumption of larger quantities can result in death through seizures or heart irregularities.

Paracetamol – is extremely toxic to cats and should NEVER be administered to a cat. NO human medication should be administered to a pet without seeking veterinary advice. Paracetamol poisoning results in facial swelling, and death due to the inability of red blood cells to carry oxygen.

Snail bait – results in neurological symptoms, tremors, convulsions and death if untreated (once convulsions develop). Take care even when products are marked as safe for pets, some pets will still consume those that contain deterrents. Snail baits are best not used or stored at all in a house with pets.

Rodenticides (rat and mouse baits) – in the same way that rat baits cause the death of mice and rats, rodenticides result in an inability of dogs and cats to clot their blood and eventually a life threatening anaemia. Take care even when products are marked as safe for pets, some pets will still consume those that contain deterrents. Rat baits are best not used or stored at all in a house with pets.

The simplest way to protect your pet is to prevent access to dangerous foods, medication, chemicals and plants around the house. If your pet does accidentally come across these products then contact Macarthur Vet Group immediately for prompt treatment. Waiting to 'see how he goes' could be deadly!