

COMPANION ANIMAL NEWS DECEMBER OF 2000

HOLIDAY DANGERS - This is such a wonderful time of year. Lots of treats and sharing and decorating going on. Please be aware that most of those treats and decorations are dangerous to your pet.

PLANTS – amaryllis, mistletoe, holly, Jerusalem Cherry, and Poinsettias are all toxic to your pet. They will all cause nausea and vomiting, with abdominal pain and sometimes diarrhea. The Jerusalem cherry can cause bloody diarrhea and cardiac arrest.

TREE PRESERVATIVES – Many tree preservatives contain fertilizer and iron salts. These can be toxic if your pet drinks them. So please either keep your tree stand covered, or don't use anything more than just sugar in your tree water.

TINSEL – This is mostly a danger for kitties and puppies. Please, if you have a cat in the house, **DO NOT** use tinsel!! It will bind up the intestines of cats and puppies very easily.

FLOCKING – spray on flocking can cause eye irritation, vomiting and depression. If aspirated, it can cause pneumonia or irritation.

CHOCOLATE – The chemical substances found in chocolates are caffeine, theobromine and theophylline. Signs of poisoning initially include vomiting, which may be followed by diarrhea, restlessness, weakness, seizures and coma. Death results from cardiac arrhythmia or respiratory failure. Treatment may include inducing vomiting, and IV fluids as well as antiarrhythmic drugs.

PANCREATITIS – This is caused from eating leftovers (fatty meals that the animal is not used to). Signs include vomiting and diarrhea, depression, and tucked up or painful abdomen.

Please call our office as soon as you notice your pet ingesting any of these things, or if you start to see any clinical signs.

HOW OLD IS YOUR PET? - It is estimated that your pet ages five to seven years for every one of yours. This suggests that health problems in your pet can progress at a faster rate. Therefore, we recommend that you bring in your older pet at least once yearly for a thorough exam. Thanks to advances in disease detection and treatment (including better arthritis medications), with the right veterinary care, your pet's senior years can be happy. There is no better time to be a senior pet, so call and set up an appointment for your senior today.

WINTER WEIGHT GAIN IN DOGS – Winter means shorter days, colder weather and added pounds for most of us. Dogs seem to have the same problem. After a long active summer, their muscles are firm and body fat is down, then winter hits. The short cool days stimulate a dog's appetite (a throwback to dogs' wild days when they needed to store fat for winter warmth). Today, most dogs have insulated houses or their owner's bed, so they don't need to burn as many calories to keep warm. In addition, the lack of available daylight hours tends to diminish our enthusiasm for walks and playtime. Increase the calories and decrease the activity and your dog gains weight.

Dogs don't get embarrassed by those added pounds, but it is hard on their joints, aggravates arthritis, and increases the risk of many other diseases. Keeping your dog's weight steady all winter requires a plan that is simple. Control the calories, and do your best to keep up the exercise. Treats are the biggest culprit contributing to weight gain. We know it is very hard to stop giving treats, so try using something different for a treat. Our favorites are baby carrots or slices of apple. You want something that does not have much for calories, and those store bought treats are full of them (not to mention the salt and preservatives). Give them something healthy and low calorie if you must do treats. When feeding your dog, measure out the amount of food for the day. Then divide it into 2 or 3 portions. If you're not sure how much that should be, just call us. Together we can keep those pounds off of your pet this winter.

DRY SKIN – 'Tis the season for those flakes of dry skin. Unfortunately, we can't douse our pets in body lotion. However, there are things we can do to help. We have a spray on conditioner that will help both dry skin and static electricity. If your pet gets itchy from his dry skin, we have an oral product called Derm Caps that can help immensely. It also helps with coat condition. We sometimes use the two products together in severe cases. Please stop in or call us if your pet is having trouble with dry skin.

**HAPPY HOLIDAYS FROM ALL OF US AT GRASSLAND
VETERINARY SERVICE!!!**