

They Are What They Eat

This is the first of a two part newsletter covering food for your pets. This one will cover what not to feed your pet and what to avoid with Halloween, Thanksgiving and the winter holidays just around the corner.

There are many substances that are dangerous to your pet. There are also many misconceptions about what pets can eat and what they can't.

Pet dogs and cats shouldn't eat raw or undercooked meat, eggs or bones. Bacteria such as *Salmonella* can infect pets causing severe gastrointestinal effects. This is one major misconception. Wild dogs and cats obviously don't cook the prey they kill but to think that domesticated animals have the same enzymes and immune systems as wild animals is wrong. Pets have been domesticated for so long that certain protective mechanisms are not there.

Another major toxin to pets is chocolate. Others that fall into this category are coffee, tea, candy, gum and toothpaste. Chocolate has *methylxanthines* in it that has toxic properties to dogs. Dark chocolate, especially baking chocolate is most toxic due to the high levels of *methylxanthine* in it. Milk chocolate and white chocolate have less. Chocolate also has caffeine which is also dangerous to pets. These stimulants can cause vomiting and diarrhea as well as heart arrhythmias. This is why coffee and tea is not for pets. Candy, gum and human toothpaste has *xylitol* which is dangerous to pets causing hypoglycemia and liver damage.

Many fruits, vegetables and nuts are toxic to dogs and cats and should be avoided. Onions, garlic, grapes, raisins, avocado, walnuts, macadamia nuts and pits, leaves and stems of fruits and vegetables are harmful if ingested.

There are other foods and ingredients that should be avoided including salt, hops and milk. The take home message here is to feed your pets dog and cat food and fresh water. Human food additions should be done with care and only after diligent research.