



"Lucky" - Mongrel with Chocolate Poisoning



Lucky

Over the festive season many of us will have plenty of opportunity to eat and drink to excess! In fact at this time of the year the sale of remedies for indigestion and overindulgence goes into overdrive.

Many exotic and interesting foods and beverages are in fact exchanged as Christmas presents. This often means that they are wrapped and then placed at the foot of the Christmas tree.

Unfortunately our canine companions are oblivious to the notion of only opening gifts with their name tag and anything which might represent a tasty snack is fair game. This usually leads to a significant number of enquiries regarding the consumption of chocolate as this patient can testify.

Cocoa and chocolate contain a drug known as theobromine. When ingested to excess this causes a very characteristic picture of central nervous system stimulation with heart and lung hyperactivity. This leads to symptoms of abdominal pain, excessive salivation, hyperactivity, vomiting and diarrhoea. In fatal cases this progresses to convulsions and heart failure.

This only occurs however at dose levels around 100mg/kg. Products where the concentration of cocoa is greatest are the most toxic. Therefore plain chocolate is potentially more dangerous than milk chocolate. Cocoa shell mulches popular with gardening enthusiasts are also potentially very risky.

Clients are encouraged to ensure that presents containing chocolate are not placed at a convenient height for dogs. Additionally, keeping a medicine cabinet for your pet's overindulgence is also useful. Soda crystals given in some water can induce vomiting and allow regurgitation of any potentially toxic substance before it has had a chance to be fully absorbed. Activated charcoal can also be very useful to limit absorption where the chocolate has been eaten several hours earlier.

The patient featured this week managed to gorge on a chocolate gift located at the foot of the tree. Fortunately he did not consume a toxic dose and therefore had all the pleasures of chocolate consumption (although he was rather hyperactive) without any of the more severe effects.....and this patient's name....."Lucky!"

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This article is available on the Fairfield Veterinary Centre web site at www.fairfield-vets.co.uk