South Clinic: 920 Yonge St, Toronto ON – (416) 920-2002
North Clinic: 280 Sheppard Ave. E., Toronto ON - (416) 226-3663

CHOCOLATE TOXICITY IN PETS

With Valentine's Day and Easter fast approaching the veterinary community can expect an increase in chocolate ingestion cases. What is more appealing than a box or basket filled with chocolates or a house riddled with hidden Easter eggs for a dog?

Considering this, the Veterinary Emergency Clinic would like to remind you of some of the facts regarding chocolate toxicity.

Methylxanthine toxicosis includes caffeine, theobromine and theophylline. Chocolate contains both theobromine and caffeine. Signs of ingestion may include vomiting, diarrhea, hyperactivity, restlessness, diuresis, ataxia, muscle tremors, tachycardia, bradycardia, arrhythmias (including ventricular dysrhythmias), hyperthermia, seizures, coma and death. Signs can occur within 1-4 hours depending on quantity ingested.

The toxic dose for theobromine is approximately 100mg/kg and the toxic dose for caffeine is 140mg/kg.

The most common forms of chocolate contain the following amounts of theobromine:
- Milk Chocolate 45-60mg/oz
- Semi Sweet Chocolate 130-185mg/oz
- Baking or unsweetened 400-450mg/oz
- Cocoa Powder 150-600mg/oz

The most common forms of chocolate contain the following amounts of caffeine:
- 8-19mg/oz

There is some variance in toxicity depending on the animal sensitivity. If the pet shows any signs, has previous health problems including cardiac, hepatic, renal or seizure disorders, examination and treatment is recommended.

Treatment for chocolate toxicity can include induction of emesis, gastric lavage and or activated charcoal and sorbital administration, diuresis with IV fluids, monitoring EKG rhythm, treatment of arrhythmias, and catheterization of the bladder to prevent resorption.

The Veterinary Emergency Clinic and Referral Centre at 920 Yonge St is available 24 hours 7 days a week to assist you, after hours emergencies can also be seen at our North clinic location, 280 Sheppard Ave East. Please feel free to contact our veterinarians if you have questions regarding this information or have a patient query.

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