

MEDIA RELEASE

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Promoting
Responsible
Dog
Ownership



Easter chocolate toxic for dogs

-Choose cocoa-free treats for dogs-

Dog owners are reminded this Easter to keep chocolate out of reach of pets at home. Dogs are highly sensitive to stimulants, such as caffeine and theobromine, which occur naturally in chocolate's main ingredient, cocoa. Consumption of cocoa products can trigger nausea and vomiting. **Dogs NSW** recommends buying cocoa free treats to allow dogs to join in the spirit of Easter.

"Dogs have fairly indiscriminate eating habits, so it our responsibility to ensure they don't start nibbling on chocolate Easter eggs while our backs are turned. Even the smallest piece, while harmless in the short term, can give dogs a taste for chocolate that they might try to satisfy later on.", warns veterinarian and **Dogs NSW** spokesperson **Dr Peter Higgins**.

In humans, *theobromine* arouses the release of euphoria hormone *serotonin*. The effect on dogs is less pleasant, acting as a diuretic, causing increased urination and dehydration. The amount of chocolate it takes to trigger *theobromine poisoning* varies according to the dog's weight and the type of chocolate.

The consumption of 50 grams of dark chocolate or 200 grams of milk chocolate per 5 kg of a dogs body weight places their health at risk. More dangerous symptoms can develop in the hours after ingestion such as an elevated and irregular heart rate and in some cases epileptic-like seizures. If treatment is not sought quickly, the cardiovascular system can completely shut down.

"This kind of poisoning progresses rapidly, and puts dogs under a great deal of stress and anxiety. If owners suspect a case of chocolate poisoning, they should contact their veterinarian for advice as soon as possible. Effective treatments are available to reverse the effects as long as it is attended to quickly," advises **Dr Higgins**.

"We like to think of our pets as members of the family, but it doesn't mean they can eat what we eat. Dogs are not mini humans. Owners are better off getting dogs a new toy or bone. Carob based treats are also a great idea to let dogs share in the Easter spirit.", suggests **Dr Higgins**.

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