Happy Thanksgiving to You and Your Pets

Thanksgiving is a holiday filled with food, beverages, decorations, and family. These festive goodies and décor, while harmless for humans, can be hazardous to your pet’s health.

To keep pets happy and healthy during this Thanksgiving, Santa Barbara County Animal Services and the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center offer pet owners the following helpful hints:

- **Holiday sweets with chocolate are not for pets.** Depending on the dose ingested, chocolate (bakers, semi sweet, milk and dark) can be potentially poisonous to many animals. In general, the less sweet the chocolate, the more toxic it could be. Vomiting, diarrhea, seizures, hyperactivity and increased thirst, urination and heart rate can be seen with the ingestion of as little as ¼ ounce of baking chocolate by a 10-pound dog.

- **Keep your pet on its normal diet.** Any change of diet, even for one meal, may give your dog or cat severe indigestion and diarrhea. This is particularly true for older animals that have more delicate digestive systems and nutritional requirements.

- **Don’t give your pets any holiday leftovers and keep pets out of the garbage.** Poultry bones can splinter and cause blockages. Greasy, spicy and fatty foods can cause stomach upset; spoiled or moldy foods can cause food poisoning, tremors or seizures.

- **Alcohol and pets do NOT mix.** Place unattended alcoholic drinks where pets cannot reach them. If ingested, the animal can become very sick and weak and may go into a coma, possibly resulting in death from respiratory failure.

- **Keep aluminum foil and cellophane away from pets.** They can cause vomiting and intestinal blockage.

Santa Barbara County Animal Services reminds you that all dogs over the age of four months are required to be licensed and to wear the license tag. A County license is your pet’s ticket home. When the activity level in your home increases, pets can slip through an open door or out a gate unnoticed. Be sure your animals are wearing their license tags this Holiday Season so they can enjoy the festivities where they belong; in your home.

If you suspect that your pet has eaten a potentially toxic substance, call your veterinarian or the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center’s emergency hotline at (888) 426-4435 for round-the-clock telephone assistance. With a little extra care and planning, you can help make sure that the furry members of your family have a safe and happy holiday season.

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