



THE STRAVEN ROAD
VETERINARY
CENTRE (LTD)

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Newsletter – SPRING 2010 Issue 9

CLINIC NEWS

It has been a busy few months for staff. In August we said farewell to Dr. Cath Neville, who has been associated with our clinics since 1997. She has relocated to the West Coast and will be getting married in January. We will miss Cath and we wish her all the best.

We welcomed Dr. Eve Allely in August. She is a Massey Graduate from 1998, and has recently moved back to New Zealand from Australia. Her love of the outdoors has seen her choose Christchurch as her home. She has a wide range of experience and skills and you will meet Eve at both our branches.

In November we welcome back Dr. Francesca Matthews. She had a son, Thomas in July. Francesca will be based at Papanui on Mondays.

In our veterinary nursing team, we said farewell to Sabrina and welcomed Angela.

Profiles of all the new staff will appear on the website shortly.

DISASTER PREPARATION

We hope that you all survived the earthquake with limited damage and no loss of pets. Even if you have suffered major material losses, we can all be very thankful that no lives were lost.

It may seem a little late talking about this when we have experienced a major disaster. However now is a good time to review your preparation for a disaster and make sure that you have everything you need. Next time we might not be lucky enough to have supermarkets open the next day!

Read more on our website about what you need to have ready for your pet:
<http://www.veterinarycentre.co.nz/disaster-prep.php>

FEATURE ARTICLE

Common Food Toxicities in pets

By Linda Sorensen and Tania Archbold

With spring here, the weather will be getting warmer and that means more people will start eating outside and leaving food scraps for pets to find and eat. Owners need to be aware that there are some foods toxic to pets and to make sure that their pets don't eat them.

Let's start with the most commonly known food toxicity.

Chocolate

Chocolate is toxic to both cats and dogs because of a chemical in it called Theo-Bromine. This chemical can be fatal if enough of it is ingested. Theo-Bromine can increase your pet's heart rate, make them agitated, and may cause heart arrhythmia (abnormal heart beats), vomiting and diarrhoea or make them hyperactive. Chocolate ingestion can lead to pancreatitis in your pet as well.

Different chocolate has different levels of Theo-Bromine in it, (darker chocolate has more), but it is best not to feed any chocolate at all.

Grapes/ Raisins

We see dogs with grape and raisin poisoning, but so far we haven't seen any cats with it. As few as 7 grapes can be poisonous to pets. There is an unknown compound in the 'fleshy' part of the grape which causes damage to your pet's kidneys. Renal failure signs can start to show in your pet about 3-5 days after they eat the grapes or raisins.

Signs are vomiting, diarrhoea, lethargy. They can have abdominal pain.

Onions/ Garlic

Both dogs and cats can get onion and garlic poisoning. There is a very small amount of garlic in some pet foods that does not appear to cause any problems. In dogs and cats garlic and onion can cause haemolytic anaemia which is the breakdown of the red blood cells.

Some signs you may notice are lethargy, weakness, pale mucus membranes (gums), or jaundice (yellowing of the gums and inner eyelids).

Mushrooms

Certain types of mushrooms can be a problem for dogs. The rule is if you won't eat it yourself, don't

feed it to your dog. Mushroom toxicity can cause liver, kidney or heart disease and neurological disorders. Clinical signs may take up to 6-8 hours to be noticed after they eat the mushrooms. Some of the signs are vomiting, seizures, drooling, nausea and depression.

Bread Dough

A lot of people don't know about this, but if you make your own bread you need to be aware of it. Bread dough can swell in the stomach and cause your pet to bloat. A cold water lavage may be needed to stop the yeast from expanding. Animals can also get alcohol poisoning from the yeast in the dough. Surgery may be needed to get the dough out of their stomachs.

Macadamia Nuts and Sugar Substitutes are also all known food toxins for pets. Read more about these at <http://www.veterinarycentre.co.nz/food-toxicities.php>

If your pet eats any of the above foods (or anything else you are concerned about, please call the us. We may want to make your pet vomit (when it is appropriate) to minimize the toxicity. Your pet may need to stay with us for supportive care while the toxins are excreted or eliminated. There are no specific treatments for most of these toxicities so getting your pet to the vet as soon as possible will help their prognosis. It will also help if you know what your pet ate, how much and the time elapsed since ingestion.

FEATURE ARTICLE

Environmental toxins:

Algae

Algae (cyanobacteria) can produce compounds that cause illness and even death in dogs. Algae "blooms" - or high reproductive bursts - occur when the weather is warm and a lack of rainfall allows streams to drop to low flows. Blooms are more likely to occur in rivers and lakes that have an excess of nutrients present, as is seen in some agricultural run-off.

The most common problematic species in rivers is Cyanobacteria Phormidium, which forms thick dark brown or black mats on rocks. These mats may break off and form floating rafts of algae as well. This algae occurs throughout Canterbury, and dogs have died in the past after licking the mats. While the algae does not always produce toxins, it is best to not let your dog swim in the river if you see large quantities of these algae mats in the area. Please note that the commonly seen brightly coloured long green algae is not toxic.

In lakes, there is phytoplankton Cyanobacteria Nodularia. This algae will commonly turn the lake water blue-green, but can also result in yellow or red discoloration of the water. There may be thick scum on the water surface, or foam at the waters edge when this algae is blooming.

Signs of exposure in dogs include lethargy, tremors, panting, twitching, paralysis, and convulsions. Death can occur as quickly as 30 minutes after exposure. Human exposure can result in rashes or blisters, eye irritation, allergic reactions, and gastrointestinal upset. Because of the rapid progression of symptoms and the potential for death in dogs, we advise that you avoid letting your pet swim in or drink from any suspect water source. There are some great internet pages for more information (including pictures of the algae mats) - check our website for links.

Wandering Jew

Wandering jew (*Tradescantia fluminensis*) is an introduced South American weed commonly found here in New Zealand. While ingestion of the plant does not seem to be problematic, it can cause itching and skin eruptions in dogs that come into contact with it. Typical lesions will be redness (with or without blisters) on less-haired areas of the body (belly, feet). This can be intensely itchy for the dog, and often times their self-chewing will progress to a full-blown skin infection.

This plant is a perennial (lives year after year), and is quite happy in shaded, damp areas. The leaves are dark green, shiny, smooth, and elliptical, measuring 3-6 cm. It produces white triangular flowers with 3 petals in December and January. Pictures may be found via the links from our website.

RNZIA lists this plant as an unwanted organism in New Zealand. It propagates from cuttings, so you need to remove the entire plant and dispose of the bits and pieces away from any soil where it could regenerate itself. It does not seed here, so removal should be curative.

Insect stings (bees, hornets, wasps) and **Spider bites** (White-tail spiders) can also cause problems for your pets. Read more about these on our website at <http://www.veterinarycentre.co.nz/enviro-toxins.php>

PROMOTIONS

Current promotions available at the clinic for Hills Pet Food, Profender and Frontline. Find out more at: <http://www.veterinarycentre.co.nz/pet-product-promotions.php>

WEBSITE

www.veterinarycentre.co.nz

Remember that everything that appears on our newsletter and more is available on our website. Check it out for lots of other interesting articles.

We would love to hear your feedback on our newsletter. We thank you for your custom and we look forward to seeing you again soon.