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Protect Your Pet's Health While Enjoying Spring Holiday Celebrations *CVMA reminds pet owners that holiday decorations, foods can be harmful to pets*

With Easter coming up on the last day of March and Passover starting in late April, the spring holiday season has arrived. This means that celebrations with family, friends, and favorite foods and decorations are on the horizon. However, some of our favorite holiday things can be harmful to pets, which is an important reminder for everyone who will be entertaining with pets around. The Chicago Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA) reminds families to be wary of potential dangers and take steps to keep their pets safe and healthy while celebrating the spring holidays.

Common springtime holiday items to keep far away from pets include:

- **Easter Lily plant** – petals, leaves, stem, and pollen are poisonous to cats. Signs of lily toxicity include lethargy, drooling, vomiting or loss of appetite within 12 hours after ingestion.
- **Chocolate** – both caffeine and the compound methyl xanthine found in chocolate are harmful and potentially fatal to dogs. The highest amounts of these elements are in dark chocolate, baker's chocolate, and cocoa powder.
- **Xylitol** – this sweetener is found in sugar-free candies and baked goods and may cause seizures and liver failure in both dogs and ferrets.
- **Grapes/raisins** – these are found in many baked goods and can cause kidney failure in dogs.
- **Meat bones** – bones from many different types of meat including ham, lamb, chicken, or steak can be dangerous and present a choking hazard for pets. This can lead to stomach upset or intestinal blockage.
- **Easter grass (both edible and non-edible)** – this can entangle the tongue or stomach of your pet, resulting in a possible obstruction or choking hazard. While edible Easter grass may be fine for kids, it can cause stomach upset depending on what ingredients are in it. It also can be a choking hazard for pets.

The biggest challenge around the holidays and particularly when entertaining others is that pets can get into plants, food, and small toys when no one is paying close attention.

According to Dr. Marina Jaworsky, CVMA Board President, “If you suspect that your pet has ingested any of these items that are potentially toxic or pose a choking hazard, don’t hesitate to contact your veterinarian or nearest emergency clinic immediately. If your pet is in distress or is acting out of character, it’s far better to be safe than sorry. While not all situations of accidental ingestion will be life threatening, many are potentially very serious or dangerous.”

Finally, the warmer spring weather is a time when some people are inspired to surprise a child with a new pet. Unfortunately, because these purchases or adoptions are done spontaneously, many of these pets – think bunnies and chicks, but also puppies and kittens – wind up in animal shelters shortly after. CVMA reminds everyone that adopting a pet should never be done on a whim, but rather with intention and the entire family’s support to ensure that pets will integrate well with their new environment and will be taken care of in the long term.

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About the Chicago Veterinary Medical Association: Chicago Veterinary Medical Association is a professional network with a longstanding tradition that connects more than 1,000 veterinarians with comprehensive resources that support their continued development as champions of animal health while encouraging the fostering of the human-animal bond.

About the Chicago Veterinary Medical Foundation: The CVMF, established in 2009, is a 501[©]3 charity that works with Chicagoland veterinarians to provide financial assistance to pet families in need by helping with the costs of their pet’s urgent, unexpected medical and surgical bills. The Foundation’s work plays a vital role in strengthening the human-animal bond by helping sick and suffering pets get well again.