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THE HAZARDS OF CHOCOLATE

For those of you that read my articles on a regular basis, this is a repeat article that I write every year at Easter time. I apologize for my repetition, but I feel that this is a very important subject.

Firstly, East is in April this year, but if you are like me, you will start stocking up on 'chocolate supplies' very soon. My advice would be to place those chocolate eggs and bunnies out of harms way, and in a safe place. Take the temptation away from everyone, including our pets!

Most dogs and some cats love the taste of chocolate and if given the opportunity will eat whatever they have access to.

Each Easter time, we receive many calls from pet owners reporting chocolate ingestion by their pet. The owners did not offer these pets chocolate, but rather the pets have opened cupboards, jumped on counters, or actually opened gift-wrapped boxes of Easter bunnies, eggs and candies.

Many years ago, when I was newly qualified, I had been called out on an emergency, and on returning home, found Rosie, my old black Lab in the guest bedroom. The wardrobe door was open (and damaged) and wrappers that used to contain chocolate-coated gums. That was a real learning curve for me.

Chocolate contains a compound that is toxic, if eaten in sufficient quantities. The quantity needed to be poisonous is related to the body weight of the cat or dog. The symptoms vary from gastrointestinal disturbances, abnormalities in the heart function, brain disturbances (seizures) and, in very severe cases, death.

If you suspect that your pet has ingested chocolate, I urge you to contact you veterinarian immediately. It is important that you are able to report the amount and description of the ingested chocolate so that your veterinarian can determine the potential severity.

As a postscript, Rosie survived her chocolate ordeal, but only after a lot of medical attention. She was so cute when she tried to look guilty!