

## Please keep your Easter Chocolate secure & away from Pets!

Written by Brian Adam

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We cannot stress this enough: **Chocolate is TOXIC to dogs, cats and other furry pets.** The #1 Indoor hazard at this time of year? Easter candy and decorations...and the biggest threat is **CHOCOLATE!**

In fact, dogs & cats should be kept away from all types of Easter goodies, including candy wrappers. Lilies can also be fatal if ingested. The plastic grass used to line children's baskets can cause serious gastrointestinal illness for curious kitties, while ribbons, bows and other colourful enticements also pose grave danger.

We know it's been a long winter. Before you head outdoors, here's a quick safety-checklist to keep in mind:

- **Unintended access to the outdoors.** Before you throw open your windows & doors to capture those warm spring breezes, make sure all your screens are in place, in good shape and well-secured. Remember: **Cats are prone to escaping through unscreened windows or by pushing through a damaged or unsecured screen.**

- **Spring cleaning chemicals.** If you use chemical cleaning supplies around your home, be sure to keep them in a locked cupboard or cabinet. Commercial cleaning products, almost without exception, contain chemicals that are toxic to your dog or cat, so make sure to follow label instructions carefully and store products securely away from your pet. Better yet, why not make this the year you switch to non-toxic household cleaning supplies?

- **Home improvement hazards.** If you're planning a renovation project around your home or yard this year, keep in mind that many of the chemicals and supplies you'll need can be dangerous. **Paints and solvents can be toxic, and building supplies like nails, insulation and certain tools can also pose risks.** Read the labels on all products you plan to use to see if they're safe for pets. The very best way to keep your dog or cat out of harm's way is to confine them to an area of your home well away from the project area.

## **Outdoor Dangers to watch for in warmer weather include...**

- **Seasonal allergies.** Just like you, your furry companion can have allergies to the plants and pollens of springtime. And a serious allergy in your pet is nothing to sneeze at, as your dog or cat could have a potentially fatal reaction known as anaphylactic shock. If you suspect your pet is suffering from springtime allergies, you should make an appointment with your veterinarian.
  
- **Yard and garden hazards.** The insecticides, herbicides, pesticides and fertilizers many people apply in the spring to bring their lawns and gardens back to life are full of chemicals that are dangerous for pets. Take care not to allow your dog or cat access to areas of your property where chemicals have been applied, and be sure to store all potentially toxic products out of reach.
  
- **Pretty poisons.** Before you stock up on seeds or visit your local nursery, make sure you know which plants/flowers & greenery are toxic.
  
- **Warm weather parasites.** Work with a holistic veterinarian in your area to decide what kinds of parasite preventives your pets need to keep them free of fleas, ticks, heartworm and other parasites throughout the spring and summer months.
  
- **Driving dangers.** As much as your pup may love the feel of the wind on his face, it's not a good idea to allow him to stick his head out the window of your moving car. And it's an even worse idea to put your pet in the bed of a pick-up truck for traveling. Your dog can be hit by debris and even bugs that can cause eye, ear and lung injuries. And there's simply no guarantee a dog riding in the bed of a truck or by an open car window will not either jump out of the vehicle while it's moving, or be thrown out during a quick stop or sharp turn. You should always crate your dog or cat for a ride in the car, or alternatively, use a pet seatbelt harness.
  
- **Exercise injuries.** If your dog has been inactive over the winter, be sure to start slow and help him rebuild muscle tone before he's allowed to engage in strenuous outdoor activities. This will prevent your pup from developing the type of exercise-related injuries animal clinics see on a regular basis at this time of year. Taking a few precautionary steps and exercising common sense can insure a healthy, enjoyable spring and

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summer for you and your furry buddy.

Remember: If you suspect your pet may have come in contact with a potentially poisonous substance, contact your local veterinarian immediately.