

## Dangerous and deadly: Items that could poison your pets

(Submitted by Allstate Insurance)

Last year, there were over 100,000 cases of pet poisoning in the U.S., many involving items commonly found in most homes. By learning what common foods and plants may be toxic to your pets, you can keep your furry four-legged family members out of harm's way.

Sharing what's on your plate with your pets is never a good idea. What may be delicious to you can be deadly to them.

- Chocolate: Large amounts can induce seizures, respiratory failure and cardiac arrest.
- Avocados: This fruit contains persin, which is toxic to many domestic animals.
- Grapes/raisins: Known to cause kidney failure in some animals.
- Macadamia nuts: Can cause vomiting, tremors and hyperthermia in dogs.
- Xylitol: This sweetener (found in candy and baked goods) can cause liver failure.
- Onions, garlic, chives: Can cause gastrointestinal issues in large quantities.
- Yeast in dough: Rising dough can lead to stomach or intestinal ruptures.

In 2011, the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center received nearly 166,000 phone calls about pets that were possibly exposed to poisonous substances.

Decorating your home with flowers and plants can be a lot of fun, but it can also create a ticking time bomb for your pets. In fact, more than 700 plants have been identified as being harmful to animals, including lilies, daffodils, azaleas and poinsettias.

If you believe your pet could be poisoned, first and foremost, stay calm. Every second counts, but it's more important to make sure you have the information you need to help a vet make a quick diagnosis.

Remove your pet from the area.

Collect a sample of the material ingested, preferably in the original packaging.

Contact your vet or emergency veterinary clinic.

There are five foods, however, that are safe to share:

- Apples (without seeds or core)
- Blueberries and strawberries
- Popcorn (unsalted and unbuttered)
- Carrots (raw or cooked)
- Sweet potatoes (without butter or seasoning).

## Controlling barking dogs

(Submitted by Ron Rop, franchiser, Pet Supplies Plus)

Time after time, excessive dog barking shows up near the top of the list of a pet owner's biggest concerns.

Dogs may have a good reason to bark, but when it becomes incessant, it becomes a problem. How many times have neighbors said, "enough, already" and called the police?

"Dogs bark for a number of reasons," said Randy Kusters, manager of the Holland Pet Supplies Plus Store. "Instinctively, dogs bark to communicate."

What could a dog possibly be trying to communicate?

- Boredom or frustration.
- Anxiety
- Over stimulation from their environment
- Protection of their home/family
- Aggression

No matter what the reason may be, there are solutions to the problem.

"The main thing that you have to do to cure excessive barking is to research and find out why the dog is barking," Kusters said. "If they are suffering from mild anxiety, persistent 'speak/quiet' training could be all you need to do to correct the issue."

Medications would include anti-depressants and/or anti-anxiety medications.

While some pet experts find the bark collars to be highly effective, others prefer that method only as a last resort.

"Try using a muzzle to stop the barking," said Scott Mingerink, manager of the Grandville Pet Supplies Plus store. "I think bark collars work great, depending on the dog. If you have tried everything else to stop it, most dogs will respond great to a shock collar."

"Some dogs may respond positively and others may ignore it, or become more stressed," Kusters said. "One thing that shouldn't be done, especially with automatic collars that pick up the dog's bark and zaps the dog accordingly, is leaving the collar on the dog all the time."

There are two types of collars designed to cure the nonstop barking.

One gives off the "zap" to the dog when it barks, and the other sprays a shot of citronella into the dog's face. Citronella is an irritating smell to a dog.

Most pet experts prefer the more non-intrusive methods.

"Positive reinforcement is always a plus," said Mingerink.

"I just think that the answer for controlling excessive barking isn't going to be the same for everyone," Kusters said. "There are a lot of different options and there may have to be some trial and error when attempting to break the habit." •

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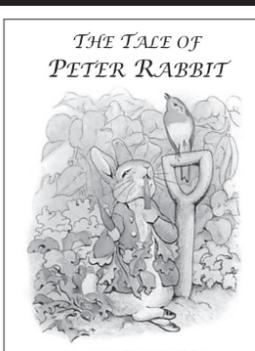
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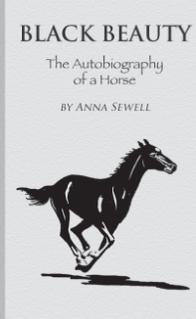
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