

Chocolate toxicity

If your canine companion is more family member than pet, you may be in the habit of sharing the foods your family loves with him. Although some people foods are fine in moderation, this is definitely not the case with chocolate. Chocolate is made from cocoa, and cocoa beans contain caffeine and a related chemical compound called theobromine, which is the real danger.

Small amounts of chocolate can cause vomiting and diarrhea in dogs. Toxic levels can cause hyperactivity, tremors, high blood pressure, rapid heart rate, seizures, respiratory failure and cardiac arrest.

How much chocolate is too much?

The more theobromine a cocoa product contains, the more poisonous it is to your dog. It takes on average 100-150mg/kg to cause a toxic reaction, however some individual dogs could be more sensitive to theobromine.

On average one ounce of milk chocolate contains 44mg of theobromine, semisweet chocolate contains 150mg/oz and Bakers chocolate 390mg/oz.

So with milk chocolate-mild signs of toxicity can occur when 0.7oz per pound of body weight is ingested; severe toxicity occurs when two ounces per pound of body weight is ingested. With semi-sweet chocolate, mild signs of toxicity can occur when 0.3 ounces per pound of body weight is ingested and severe toxicity occurs when one ounce per pound of body weight is ingested. And with Baking chocolate, as little as two small 1 ounce squares or 0.1 ounce per pound of body weight can be toxic. Baking chocolate has the highest concentration of caffeine and theobromine.

Treatment:

There is no specific antidote for theobromine poisoning and the half life is 17.5 hours in dogs. Your dog needs to be seen by a veterinarian however call immediately to find out if there is any immediate care you can begin like inducing vomiting. Your veterinarian may administer activated charcoal to inhibit absorption of the toxin. Other specific treatments will be started depending on the symptoms your dog is showing. Hospitalization may be needed and IV fluids given to keep your dog hydrated.

