



The Southtowns Journal

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Have a Pet-Safe and Happy Easter Holiday

You probably know by now that chocolate is toxic to dogs. You would never share chocolate bunnies with your dog. Since Easter is almost here, be sure to remind everyone in your family of the danger and ask them to take extra precautions to keep Easter candy out of your dog's reach. Remind guests not to share Easter goodies like ham or ham bones with your friendly little pup, no matter how cute she looks when she begs.

If your dog has the house to himself when you're away, make sure everyone's Easter baskets are up high or in a room behind closed doors. Big dogs might not be able to resist the temptation of a counter full of chocolate candy. Small dogs, who are at highest risk, can climb on a chair to reach a table full of candy or pull on a tablecloth to bring the candy to the floor.

Chocolate toxicity is among the 20 most common poisonings reported by the National Animal Poison Control Center. Chocolate contains theobromine, a stimulant related to caffeine, that's harmless to us but toxic to dogs. It can cause vomiting and diarrhea, restlessness and hyperactivity, excessive thirst and increased urination, a rapid heart rate and excessive panting. Larger amounts can be fatal.

Small dogs have a much higher mortality risk after consuming chocolate. One small chocolate rabbit might have little or no affect on a German Shepherd, but the same amount of chocolate could kill a Chihuahua. The severity depends on the dog's weight, the type of chocolate and the amount of chocolate consumed. Milk chocolate is harmful, but unsweetened baking chocolate has six to nine times as much theobromine. The toxic amount of theobromine is about 50 mg. per pound of a dog's body weight.

For milk chocolate, about 1 ounce per 1 pound of a dog's body weight can be lethal. For semi-sweet chocolate about 1/3 ounce per 1 pound of a dog's body weight can be lethal. For the dark unsweetened chocolate used in baking, about 1/10 ounce per 1 pound of a dog's body weight can be lethal. That means that for a 10 pound dog, about 10 ounces of milk chocolate, 3 ounces of semi-sweet chocolate, or just one ounce of baking chocolate could be lethal.

If you think your dog may have found and eaten a harmful amount of chocolate, call us right away at 824-4108 or call the emergency clinic at 839-4043 immediately! Symptoms will usually begin within two hours but sometimes it could also take as long as 24 hours. Delaying treatment could be a fatal mistake. The more advanced symptoms can include muscle tremors, stiffness, seizures, Cardiac arrhythmia and coma.

Emergency care will vary depending upon the elapsed time since the ingestion. It will also be important to know the kind and quantity of chocolate that was consumed, if possible. Treatment might include induced vomiting and administration of activated charcoal by mouth to reduce the absorption of chocolate. It might also include IV fluids, medication to prevent shock, anti-seizure medications and/or cardiac medications to stabilize the heartbeat.

Chocolate is not the only harmful thing a pet can find in an Easter basket. Though it's not as dangerous as chocolate bunnies, other candy, especially if eaten in large amounts, can also cause an upset stomach, vomiting and diarrhea.

Kitties can get into trouble at Easter too. Plastic Easter grass cannot be digested and it can cause intestinal damage. This is a big attraction with cats, but it can cause major problems for playful dogs too. Keep baskets with Easter grass out of reach .

In addition to Easter grass, many cats like to eat plants. The most common Easter flowers are lilies and several types of lilies are highly toxic to cats. These include: Easter lily, Tiger lily, Rubrum lily, Japanese show lily, Stargazer lily, and some species of the Day lily.

Unfortunately, all parts of the lily plant are considered toxic to cats and consuming even small amounts can be life threatening. Within only a few hours of ingestion, a cat may vomit, become lethargic, or develop a lack of appetite. These signs continue and worsen as kidney damage or renal failure progresses. Without prompt and proper treatment, the cat's kidneys shut down within 36 to 72 hours; which is fatal. If you think your cat has eaten a lily, be sure to call us or the emergency clinic right away.

Being a responsible pet owner means keeping our pets safe and this means removing all potential hazards from our homes (or at least keeping them out of reach).



Pet of the Month Club

The doctors and staff would like to introduce you to the first honorees of our Pet of the Month Club.

February
Mandy Hazel

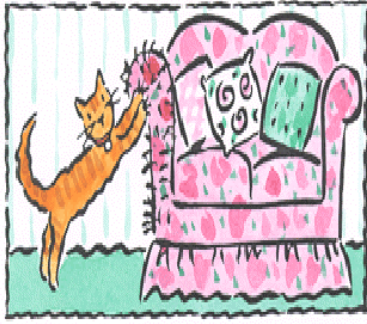
March
Hunter Privet

Both Mandy and Hunter enjoyed their "spa day" baths and gift baskets!



Now That Spring Is Here...

Warmer weather means that you and your dog will be spending more playtime outside. Make sure your dog is wearing a license. Check his ID tag to make sure your phone number hasn't worn off and the tag is still readable. Also check that the collar fits properly and will not slip off. Are all of his vaccinations up to date? Spending more time outdoors means possible contact with other dogs who might not be vaccinated.



No No Kitty!

We're all familiar with the impact that curiosity can have on a cat's life expectancy, but a cat's liking for nosing around can be pretty upsetting to his caregivers as well. That's why some cat owners seek to deter their felines from doing certain things through the use of tools and techniques used to keep cats away from particular places or to stop them from engaging in certain behaviors.

Establishing an effective stimulus to prevent various antics is often a case of trial-and-error. But don't forget that even after you've found the best method to discourage a cat from a particular action or place, the approach will seldom work effectively unless you offer a positive alternative.

What we want to offer is a rundown of some common deterrents, each of which will have varying degrees of success depending on the cat:

One way to keep your cat away from certain areas is to surround (or cover) the area with materials that make your cat's paws uncomfortable. Try shelf paper (sticky side up) or double-sided carpet tape. Heavy plastic carpet runner (pointed side up) can also be used effectively in some situations. You may need to weight the "material" firmly or tape it down to ensure it stays put. To protect furniture or floor finishes from sticky substances, attach the material to a piece of foil or heavy plastic and secure that with weights or light tape.

Because cats are often attracted or repelled by certain scents, you can set boundaries by soaking cotton balls, rags, or washcloths in a "stinky" substance that is not harmful to cats. To help protect carpets, upholstery, floors, or furniture, place the saturated object on a piece of weighted foil or heavy plastic. To prevent the substance from seeping into the ground, use the same precautions. Some of the most effective substances to apply include the following: Citrus odors*such as concentrated juices or fresh peels, colognes or commercial repellent sprays.

Just as certain odors will discourage cats from visiting places where you don't want them, certain displeasing tastes will keep them from returning to things they chew on, such as cords or wires.. Some of the following substances may damage furniture or floor finishes, however, so be sure to test them in a hidden location before widespread use. One of the most common is Bitter Apple* or a similar spray or gels marketed specifically for pet taste aversion, but Aloe gel can also work.

Some items can be used to distract your cat and thereby interrupt his unwanted behavior. Such devices are not meant to terrify your cat, but to provide a brief distraction. Also, it's best if your cat does not perceive the distraction as coming from you. In the instant your cat's attention is focused on the distracting action, redirect his behavior to an appropriate object, and then give him lots of praise. Some effective aversives that you control include: a spray bottle or squirt gun filled with water or a combination of water and vinegar (Note: Avoid high-powered water guns that have a very forceful spray), a loud air horn, or a whistle. A shaker can, easily made from a soda can filled with nails, pennies, beans, or pebbles*then securely taped shut, can also work well.

Sometimes the best approach for teaching an animal is to work from a distance. If every aversive is delivered when you're in the room, your cat may quickly learn, for example, to jump on the coffee table only when you're not around. A few good approaches include: motion detectors that react with a startling sound, or an aluminum pie plate containing water, beans, or pebbles*preferably balanced precariously on a counter or other undesirable "jumping" surface so that it will fall off when your cat jumps up.

When using these techniques, remember that they offer the advantage of modifying certain feline behaviors in ways that distance the "correction" from you, the cat owner. Experiment with different types of correction and try to match the technique to the cat. For example, using a surprise technique on a cat who tends to be fearful should be a last resort.

Above all, be patient and give your feline frequent play sessions and attention as well as appropriate objects for him to scratch, claw, and climb. That way, your cat's antics will amuse you instead of annoy you, and the special bond between the two of you will continue to grow.

Spring is sprung,
The grass is riz
The parasites know
Where your pets iz...



Protect your pet
with ONE monthly topical treatment.





Things to Consider Before You Hop Down the Bunny Trail

Rabbits may be easy to love, but they're not as easy to care for. These lovable animals are wonderful pets for people who take the time to learn about their needs. Rabbits can live for more than 10 years. Anyone considering adding a rabbit to their family should carefully research their care before making a decision. What we are offering here is some quick information to get you started:

Every rabbit owner should know that the safest place for a rabbit to live is indoors. Rabbits should never be kept outside! Domestic rabbits are different from their wild relatives*they do not tolerate extreme temperatures well.

Whether you decide to let your rabbit roam free in your entire home or just a limited area, it is important that you make everything rabbit-safe. One little bunny can easily find a whole lot of trouble in an average home. Because rabbits like to chew, make sure that all electrical cords are out of reach and outlets are covered. Chewing through a plugged-in cord can result in severe injury or even death. Their chewing can also result in poisoning if the wrong objects are left in the open or in unlocked low cabinets.

If kept in a cage, rabbits need a lot of room to easily move around. A rabbit's cage should be a minimum of five times the size of the rabbit. Your rabbit should be able to completely stretch out in his cage and stand up on his hind legs without bumping his head on the top of the cage. Additionally, cages with wire flooring are hard on rabbits' feet, which do not have protective pads like those of dogs and cats. If you place your rabbit in a wire cage, be sure to layer the floor with cardboard or other material. Place a cardboard box or "rabbit condo" in the cage so the bunny has a comfortable place to hide, and respect your animal's need for quiet time

When rabbits are kept in a cage, they need to be let out for several hours each day for exercise. Aside from running and jumping, rabbits also enjoy exploring their surroundings. This is an ideal time to play and interact with your rabbit. Make sure that he has a safe area to play and explore.

Just like cats, rabbits can easily learn to use a litter box. Place a litter box in the cage to encourage this behavior. If your rabbit roams freely through multiple rooms of your home, it's a good idea to have litter boxes in several places. Many rabbits enjoy spending time relaxing in their litter box, so make sure that it is of ample size. For bedding, stay away from cedar or other wood shavings, which may cause liver damage or trigger allergic reactions in rabbits. Also avoid any kitty litters, which can cause serious health problems if eaten. Instead, stick with organic litters made of paper, wood pulp, or citrus. Newspaper can work too.

Rabbits have complex digestive systems, so it's very important that they receive a proper diet. Many health problems in rabbits are caused by foods that are incompatible with their digestive physiology.

Rabbits need hay. Specifically, Timothy grass hay. Rabbits should have access to a constant supply of this hay, which aids their digestive systems and provides the necessary fiber to help prevent health problems such as hair balls, diarrhea, and obesity. Alfalfa hay should only be given to adult rabbits in very limited quantities, if at all. In addition to hay, the basic diet of an adult rabbit should consist of leafy, dark green vegetables such as romaine and leaf lettuces, parsley, cilantro, collard greens, arugula, escarole, endive, dandelion greens, and others. While hay and vegetables are the basis of a healthy diet, rabbits also enjoy treats. Cartoons lead us to believe that carrots are the basis of a healthy rabbit diet. Many rabbits enjoy carrots, but they are a starchy vegetable and should only be given sparingly as a treat. With such sensitive digestive systems, there are a number of foods that rabbits should avoid eating. These include iceberg lettuce, tomatoes, cabbage, corn, beans, peas, potatoes, beets, onions, rhubarb, bamboo, seeds, grains.

If you choose to make pellets a part of your rabbit's diet, it is best to use them as a supplement to the dark green, leafy vegetables, not as a substitute. These pellets should only be given in small quantities (1/8 -1/4 cup per five pounds of body weight per day, spread out over two daily feedings). Also, make sure to purchase Timothy-based pellets. Many brands of rabbit feed contain seeds, corn, and other foods that are too high in calories to be the basis for a healthy rabbit's diet.

Chewing is part of a rabbit's natural behavior, but it doesn't have to be destructive. To keep rabbits active and amused, you may want to put untreated wood blocks or cardboard in their cages. You can also use paper-towel rolls, toilet-paper rolls, and other chewable cardboard materials that can be tossed in the trash once they've served their purpose.

Rabbits are fragile animals who must be handled carefully. Their bones are so delicate that the muscles in their powerful hind legs can easily overcome the strength of their skeletons. As a result, if not properly restrained, struggling rabbits can break their own spines. Never pick a rabbit up by his ears.

Just like cats and dogs, rabbits need to receive proper medical care, including annual check-ups. Spaying or neutering your rabbit is very important. Aside from preventing unwanted litters of kits, spaying or neutering has health and behavior benefits. Neutering males eliminates the risk of testicular cancer and can reduce aggression and territory-marking behaviors. Female rabbits have extremely high rates of reproductive cancers as they get older, but spaying them can eliminate those potential problems.

When thinking about adding a rabbit to your family, please remember that rabbits are not toys and they are typically not appropriate pets for children. Rabbits are complex creatures*socially, psychologically, and physiologically. They require a great deal of special care and supervision. If you make the decision to add rabbits to your family, consider adopting from one of our local animal shelters.



**Join us
in welcoming the
newest members
of the Southtowns Team
Josh
Animal Caretaker
Robynn
Veterinary Assistant
Judy
Receptionist**



Congratulations to Shannon
and her husband Jason!
They just had
a baby girl!
Ashlyn Chevelle
arrived on
February 18th
at 12:58 am.
She was
20 inches long
and weighed
8 pounds, 9 ounces.

All of us at Southtowns wish you a very

