Chocolate and Dogs

Dogs are sensitive to chocolate. It does depend on the size of the dog and the amount of chocolate eaten, but in some cases chocolate and cocoa products can kill your dog. Chocolate should never be accessible to dogs and chocolate should never be used as a treat for dogs or included in any dog treat recipes.

Why is chocolate poisonous for dogs?

While most humans love chocolate and can eat it without hazard, other than to our waistlines, chocolate contains a substance called theobromine, similar to caffeine, which is toxic for dogs.

Theobromine is easily digested by humans, but is dangerous for dogs as it quickly builds up in their bodies.

Chocolate poisoning in dogs can cause muscle tremors, seizures, irregular heartbeat, internal bleeding or a heart attack. In dogs, theobromine poisoning is a direct result of consuming chocolate and is usually marked by severe hyperactivity.

Different chocolate and different dogs

Dark and bitter chocolate contain higher levels of theobromine and therefore it takes only a very small amount to poison a dog. For example: 25 grams of dark chocolate may be enough to poison a 20 kg dog.

Milk chocolate and white chocolate have lower levels of theobromine, but still pose a risk to your dog. A large dog can consume more chocolate than a small dog before suffering ill effects.

For example, if a large dog eats a small amount of chocolate they will probably suffer an upset stomach with vomiting or diarrhoea. However, if a small dog has even a small amount of chocolate the effects can be critical.

What to do if your dog has eaten chocolate

The usual treatment for theobromine poisoning is to induce vomiting (if within two hours of ingestion).

If you are worried or think that your dog may have eaten a quantity of chocolate and especially if they are showing any of the signs listed above, please call your veterinarian immediately.

If you have a small dog that has eaten a box of chocolates, get emergency assistance ASAP. There is no time to wait and see.