

Ask A Vet: Thanksgiving Pet Perils

Sunday, November 22, 2015

Dear Dr. Weldy's,

Any Thanksgiving advice concerning our pets and the holiday feast?

Dear Reader,

With Thanksgiving coming up, I will share some thoughts and considerations for the big meal. First, if having family over, be considerate of your dog's or cat's personal space. Many pets are not accustomed to having a house full of people with all of the accompanying sound. These pets can have anxiety attacks, have inappropriate urination or defecation in the house, or possibly lash out by biting or scratching house guests. If you know your dog is predisposed to any of these signs, or has another anxiety disorder, make sure to give them a place to hide and get away should the need arise. Some dogs do well being crated away from the noise, while others do fine in a bedroom, basement, or den with a soft place to lay and/or a toy. You can talk to your regular veterinarian if you think a sedative might be useful to calm your anxious dog or cat.

When preparing the food and while eating the meal, the general rule is share nothing with your dog. Dogs can have a relatively sensitive stomach and certain foods can cause signs ranging from mildly upsetting (causing vomiting or diarrhea) to lethally toxic to your dog. Foods like onions, garlic, raisins, and grapes can be downright toxic to your dog. It is best to contact your veterinarian immediately if your dog eats any of these items. Eating raw or undercooked turkey can lead to bacterial infections within the intestines. The most common signs of these infections are fever, vomiting, diarrhea, and lethargy. Consuming high fat or protein meals such as: meats, side dishes, gravy, desserts, etc, can lead to a condition called pancreatitis. Pancreatitis is an inflammation of the pancreas, which is the organ responsible for producing digestive enzymes. If this organ becomes inflamed due to overeating fat or protein, your dog will vomit, act extremely sick and painful. These signs usually appear 2-3 days after eating the inciting meal. If you see any of the above mentioned signs, or know your dog has consumed these products, contact your veterinarian.

Lastly, when the meal is over and the trash is collected, take all of the bags outside or otherwise remove them from access to your dog. The main concern is that of eating the leftovers from the meal that you prevented them from eating in the first place. However, the trash also contains bones which can splinter leading to tears or punctures within the esophagus, stomachache, or intestines. Dogs can be indiscriminate when eating from the trash, and can eat aluminum foil, paper towels, or other items leading to blockages within the intestines. To avoid any of the potential problems from the garbage, it is best to remove any bags or cans from immediate access to your dog.

As always, ask your regular veterinarian if you have any questions involving the holiday season and your pets.

-Dr. Jason Heitzman