



Keeping Your Pet Healthy During The Holidays

The holidays can be a special time of the year for the entire family and that includes the family pets. But the holidays can also be a hazardous time for your pets if you don't pay attention.

Dr. Bruce Teachout, Animal Health Clinic of Yankton, reminds people to use common sense.

Make sure your pets stay away from the decorations. Things like ribbons, bows, tinsel and ornaments can damage the digestive systems if eaten.

Plants can also be dangerous if your four-legged friends get into them.

"The poinsettias today are not as toxic as they use to be. But we still see a lot of digestive upset," said Dr. Teachout.

The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) adds that you should keep your pets away from things like ivy, holly and mistletoe also. They can cause nausea and even death in some cases.

Watching what your pet eats during the holidays is also a good idea. One common problem Dr. Teachout sees is stomach problems caused by excess food sources.

"We see a lot of what I call the Thanksgiving Flu," he says.

This is caused by people giving their dogs or cats things from the table that they normally don't get to eat.

"They get over it but it's messy," he adds.

During the holidays there are a lot of treats often sitting around. Make sure they are kept out of your pet's reach. Things with chocolate, especially the dark rich kind, can have dangerous side effects for your pets. Dr. Teachout also recommends that if you are baking to make sure your pets can't get into yeast. A simple solution is to have special treats that are just for your pets. You can buy them at the store or make your own. There are a lot of recipes out there for healthy treats for your dog.

The HSUS also says to keep wrapped candies away from your pets. Not only can the candy cause a problem but the wrappers can also cause digestive problems.

With the hustle and bustle of the holidays we often forget to involve our pets. To keep them happy, Dr. Teachout says to get your pet involved... buy them a present.

"Keep your pet involved. Pets can feel left out when you get a lot of company and that's when you get into the chewing and behavioral problems. They get depressed," he says.

If you have a pet that can be hyper-excited, Dr. Teachout says there are nutritional supplements available that can help keep your pet under control. But because each pet is different, just like people, you should visit with your vet to see what would work best.

Have fun this holiday season, but remember, keep your four-legged friends happy and safe.

■ by Heidi Henson

Want to make a special holiday treat for your dog. Here is a recipe for a fun, easy treat that is also healthy.



Low Fat Carrot Dog Treats

Ingredients:

1 med. banana (ripe, please)

1 cup shredded carrots*

1/4 cup unsweetened applesauce

1/8 cup water (maybe more, as needed)

1 1/2 c. whole wheat flour (keep some handy for rolling)

1 cup rolled oats

Directions:

Start off by preheating your oven to 350 degrees, lightly spraying a baking sheet with nonstick cooking spray and sprinkling a little flour onto the surface you're planning to use to roll out the dough.

In a medium bowl, mash up the banana and mix in the shredded carrots. To the carrot and banana, add the water and applesauce. Stir. Next, add the water and applesauce. Stir all of the ingredients together until they are thoroughly combined.

Using your hands, knead the mixture until a dough forms. Dump the dough onto the lightly floured surface that you prepared earlier. Roll it out until it's about a half inch thick. Using a cookie cutter (bone shapes are fun!) or the rim of a small glass, cut into 3 pieces. Place the pieces onto your lightly sprayed baking sheet.

Bake the dog treats for 25 minutes.

Before "serving," let them cool completely. Here's a tip that you may find useful: If your dog likes a little more crunch to his treats, turn off the oven and let the treats cool there overnight.

This recipe makes about 24 low fat, healthy dog treats. They'll last about 3 weeks, if stored in the fridge and up to 6 months, if you decide to freeze them.

*About the shredded carrots... If you do the shredding yourself, you should keep the skin on. That'll add an extra nutritional punch to the recipe. Regardless of whether or not you buy them shredded or do them yourself, give the shredded carrots a rough chop before adding them to the recipe. The treats will come out better if they're a little bit smaller.



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