

## FOODS AND PLANTS TOXIC TO DOGS AND CATS

Last month we discussed plants that are poisonous to horses. Dogs and cats are also vulnerable to poisoning – from eating plants and, more commonly, from eating a number of human foods. By their nature, many cats and dogs are inquisitive and when this is combined with a hungry pet, problems can occur. So please keep an eye out for the following:

### *In the Garden*

- **Daffodil and tulip bulbs** – the bulbs can cause severe irritation to the tissue of the mouth and oesophagus, resulting in drooling, vomiting and diarrhoea
  - Daffodils are more dangerous and can cause arrhythmias (irregular heart beat) and respiratory depression
- **Oleander** – contains a very serious toxin called cardiac glycoside that can cause arrhythmias, vomiting, bloody diarrhoea and sudden death
  - Any part of the plant can be toxic – whether growing, cut or dried
  - Thankfully dogs and cats are generally unlikely to eat oleander as it has a bitter taste but even a very small amount can be toxic
- **Lilies** (including Arum, calla, Easter and tiger lilies) – all parts of the plants (leaves and flowers, whether cut in a vase or growing in a pot or garden) are extremely toxic to cats
  - The toxin destroys the kidneys resulting in vomiting, anorexia and depression and is quickly fatal if left untreated
- **Cycads** – ingestion of the seeds can cause acute hepatic necrosis (death of liver tissue) which presents as abdominal pain, depression and possibly jaundice/vomiting
- **Potting mix** – ingestion of potting mix can be rapidly fatal for dogs
  - There are many different types of potting mix with different ingredients so it is hard to say why it is so dangerous
  - The combination of fertiliser, fungal spores and rotting organic matter plus the risk of gastrointestinal obstruction or laceration from the pieces of wood and bark seem like enough good reasons to keep dogs away from potting mix!

### *In the Kitchen*

- **Onions and garlic** – are toxic to dogs and cats whether raw or cooked
  - Onions and garlic cause the red blood cells to break down resulting in anaemia, with clinical signs such as weakness, lethargy, pallor and red urine
- **Chocolate** – the caffeine-like substance in chocolate interferes with the electrical signals of the heart which can cause sudden death
  - The fat content of the chocolate means that dogs are also at risk of developing pancreatitis
  - Cocoa and dark chocolate are the most dangerous followed by milk chocolate with white chocolate least dangerous
- **Grapes/raisins** – an unknown toxin in grapes, raisins and sultanas damages kidney tissue, causing an inability to urinate as well as vomiting and diarrhoea

- **Avocados** – the ripe fruit is toxic to dogs and cage birds which can present as coughing, difficulty breathing and sudden death
- **Macadamia nuts** – between 5 and 40 nuts may be enough to be toxic (but not fatal) for a 20kg dog
  - Clinical signs (which should resolve spontaneously within 24 hours) include hind limb weakness/ataxia and muscle tremors

The best advice is to make sure that your pets cannot get access to any of these potentially dangerous plants or foods. Also make sure that everyone in the house is aware that pets should not be allowed to eat these dangerous foods even if they are sitting up begging nicely!

If you need any help or advice on how different foods or plants can affect your animals, please contact the friendly team at Cowra Veterinary Centre.