

## Nutrition Support Service

The Nutrition Support Service of the Veterinary Medical Teaching Hospital (VMTH) has been assisting veterinarians, hospital staff and students since 1989. The service provides recommendations for commercial or home-cooked diets, and nutritional support for previously diagnosed diseases, either by consultation at the VMTH or via telephone on behalf of the clientele and staff of veterinarians in private practice. For referral patients who have already had a medical workup to rule out underlying diseases, nutritional consultations and an obesity clinic are available.

The service is staffed by residents in small animal clinical nutrition under the guidance of four board-certified veterinary nutritionists—Associate Professor of Nutrition and Chief of Service Andrea Fascetti, VMD, PhD, DACVIM, DACVN; WALTHAM Specialist in Clinical Nutrition Scott Campbell, BVSc, MACVSc, DACVN; Assistant Clinical Professor of Nutrition Sean Delaney DVM, MS, DACVN; and Assistant Clinical Professor of Nutrition Sally Perea DVM, MS, DACVN. The current residents are Lisa Weeth, DVM, and Hill's Fellow in Nutrition Jennifer Larsen, DVM, MS. The Nestlé Purina Nutrition Technician is Dawn Cauthen, BS.

The small animal post-doctoral residency program in clinical veterinary nutrition at UC Davis provides two years of advanced training, in preparation for eligibility and board certification by the American College of Veterinary Nutrition (ACVN).

In the event you need emergency assistance for your dog or cat during the holidays, contact your primary care veterinarian or the local animal emergency service. Additional information on possible poisons that may be encountered by your pet can be located at the ASPCA/Animal Poison Control Center (1-888-426-4435, [www.apcc.aspc.org](http://www.apcc.aspc.org)).

# Dietary Holiday Hazards

## Protect Your Dog or Cat throughout the Holidays—and Year Round

While pets will not normally sample dangerous edibles like Christmas pudding doused with flaming brandy, there are still a number of dietary hazards—from toxic substances to everyday human food items—to avoid over the holidays and throughout the year.

Dr. Scott Campbell, WALTHAM Specialist in Clinical Nutrition at the Veterinary Medical Teaching Hospital, offers the following guide to protecting your dog or cat from hazardous substances:

### Hazardous Human Food Items

The dangers of feeding your pet various human foods extend beyond the risk of expanding his or her waistline. A number of research studies have reported the toxic potential of many common ingredients when fed to dogs or cats.

Grape and raisin ingestion can cause kidney failure in both dogs and cats. Macadamia nut ingestion has been associated with weakness and tremors in dogs. Chocolate, tea, cola and cocoa beans contain theobromine, which dogs and cats do not metabolize efficiently. Ingestion of these ingredients can cause gastrointestinal upset, cardiac arrhythmias and seizures. Animals ingesting foods containing garlic or onion may develop anemia secondary to oxidative damage to the red blood cells and altered platelet function.

Food products containing xylitol or propylene glycol may also have detrimental effects in pets and should be avoided. Other potentially dangerous ingredients for dogs and cats include caffeine, salt and uncooked yeast dough.

### Harmful Household Items

Access to items such as bones, candy wrappers, aluminum foil, plastic wrap or ribbons can also be a problem for dogs and cats, as such items may become lodged in the mouth, esophagus, stomach or intestine if eaten. Ingestion of prescription (anti-inflammatory agents, sedatives, diet pills, vitamins, etc.) or recreational drugs (alcohol, nicotine, marijuana, etc.) can be life threatening to pets.

Toxic plant material (lilies, castor beans, cycad palm, mold, toxic mushrooms, mistletoe, holly, oleander, etc.) or contaminated water from various sources can also pose a problem for your pet if ingested. Other household items (antifreeze, rat bait, slug or snail bait, herbicides, strong pesticides, lead paint, batteries, fertilizer, glue, etc.) can also pose a year-round risk to pets.

### Dietary Considerations

Rapid alterations in the nutrient profile of the diet (the amount of fat, protein, carbohydrate or even moisture in the diet) can result in gastrointestinal upset manifesting as vomiting, diarrhea, gas or abdominal discomfort. In many cases these upsets may be resolved after a period of withholding food, but in the most dramatic occurrences, conditions such as pancreatitis or dehydration can occur, making the situation much more serious. Consistency of the feeding plan is particularly important in dogs and cats with existing diseases.

Proper food preparation is always important. Raw, undercooked or improperly stored meats can be a source of microbial infection. Raw egg white contains the glycoprotein avidin, which can create a biotin deficiency if fed regularly.

As a general rule, treats should supply less than 10 percent of the total daily calories ingested to prevent unbalancing the daily diet, to minimize undesired weight gain and to reduce the risk of a pet developing finicky eating habits.

While your companion animal may beg for that last bit of your dinner, show your love with a hug or some dedicated play time instead. Making the additional effort to keep your dog or cat's diet and surroundings free of hazards will help to ensure that your pet also enjoys a happy holiday!

