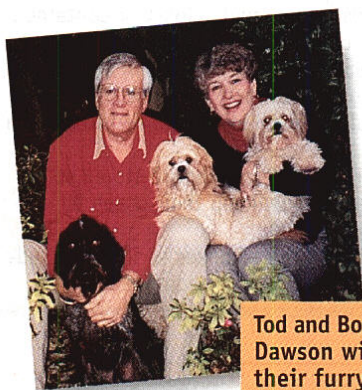


pets By Christine R. McLaughlin

Hidden Dangers

How to Protect Your Pet from Poisons



Tod and Bonnie Dawson with their furry friends Maverick, Madonna and Eliza.

The night started out like any other. It was late and Bonnie Dawson and her husband, Tod, were ready to go to sleep. But when Bonnie called for her three dogs to come to bed, not one of them came.

Curious, she approached the living room to see what was going on. Through the dim light, she saw all three dogs—Maverick, a large German wirehaired pointer; Madonna and Eliza, two smaller Lhasa apsos—looking at her, wagging their tails wildly. When she turned on the light, she was shocked by what she found: a two-pound box of choco-

lates, ripped open, and all of the contents—except the wrappers—apparently devoured by the dogs.

Fortunately, Bonnie knew that chocolate can be toxic to dogs; it can cause irregular heartbeat, seizures—and in some cases, it can even be fatal.

She immediately called the National Animal Poison Control Center (NAPCC), and after the vet there learned of Madonna and Eliza's small size,

he urged Bonnie to rush the two to a local emergency clinic. At the clinic, veterinarians were able to induce vomiting by placing a medication (apomorphine) under the dogs' eyelids (the drug stimulates the nausea center in the brain, causing the dog to vomit almost immediately).

Luckily, the Dawsons caught the situation in time, and all three dogs survived. Unfortunately, many pets are not so lucky—it takes only three ounces of baker's chocolate to kill a 20-pound dog.

To prevent a life-threat-



Leaving toxic foods like chocolate within Rover's reach can be dangerous.

ening situation for your pet, it is crucial to be aware of common household hazards and to always keep them out of paws' reach. Some tips:

● **Know the harmful foods.** They may taste great to pets, but certain foods can prompt a variety of toxic reactions in animals. The most common harmful foods to watch out for are onions and onion powder, baker's chocolate, yeast dough and moldy foods.

● **Keep chemicals out of reach.** Assume all chemicals are lethal and make them off-limits to pets. This means cleaning agents, lawn chemicals, insecticides, pesticides, rat poisons and automotive products. As little as one teaspoonful of antifreeze could kill a cat; less than one tablespoonful could be lethal to a 20-pound dog.

● **Mind your medications.** Always be sure you're administering medications correctly. "Never give a cat anything recommended for a dog and vice versa," emphasizes Jill Richardson, D.V.M., a veterinary poison information specialist with the NAPCC, based in Urbana, Illinois. Even over-the-counter pain relievers should never be given to pets without a veterinarian's direction. Ibuprofen, for example, can cause stomach ulcers and kidney failure in both cats and dogs. In high levels it can cause coma and may be deadly.

If you need to take your pet to a clinic because of poisoning, always bring the label or container of the toxin with you. This will help the vet know exactly what the active ingredient is.

You can contact the NAPCC's 24-hour hotline at 888-426-4435 (a \$45 consultation fee applies). For general poison information, visit NAPCC's Web site at www.napcc.aspc.org. ■

Christine R. McLaughlin is a freelance writer. She lives in Oreland, Pennsylvania.

Poisonous Plants

For dogs and cats, ingesting even common plants can cause a variety of reactions from depression and tremors to death. The most dangerous indoor and outdoor varieties include rhododendron, azalea, oleander, hyacinth, daffodil, castor bean, sago palm, yew plant, aloe, tulip, iris, and various lilies. Dr. Richardson says, "Some plants may only cause an upset stomach, but it's best to keep all plants away from pets—just in case."

