FOOD POISONINGS IN DOGS

Ajay Kumar Upadhyay
Professor and Head, Department of Veterinary Public health and Epidemiology
College of Veterinary and Animal Sciences, Pantnagar-263145.
[Received: 19.10.2016; Accepted: 29.5.2017]

Those who keep dogs know that dog eats all that you eat, because he imitates the way you do the things. Moreover, dog remain in and around one or other family members and take the food alongside. While sharing the occasional delicacy with your dog is fine. It is important at the same time to be aware that some foods can be very dangerous to dogs. Take caution to ensure your pet by no means takes to the foods that are hazardous.

Alcohol
Dogs are additionally receptive to alcohol than us. Even ingesting a small amount of a product containing alcohol can cause significant intoxication. Dogs may be exposed to alcohol through drinking alcoholic drinks, such as beer, wine or mixed drinks, alcohol-containing elixirs and syrups, and fermented food stuff. Alcohol intoxication commonly causes stagger, vomiting, loss of coordination, disorientation and stupor. In severe cases, coma, seizures and death may occur. Dogs showing mild signs of alcohol intoxication should be closely monitored, and dogs who are so drunk that they can’t stand up should be monitored by a veterinarian until they get better.

Avocado
All parts of avocado such as leaves, fruit, seeds and bark are toxic to dogs. It is mostly being used in salad in India. It contains a toxic material known as persin. Dogs, birds, rabbits, and horses, are especially sensitive to it, as they can have respiratory as well as cardiac distress, congestion, fluid accumulation around the heart, and even death by consuming avocado. If consumed in small quantity by dogs and cats, we do not anticipate serious signs of illness. In some dogs and cats, mild stomach upset may occur if the animal eats a significant amount of avocado flesh or peel. Ingestion of the pit can lead to obstruction in the gastrointestinal tract, which is a serious situation requiring urgent veterinary care.

Avocado is sometimes included in imported pet foods for nutritional benefit. We would generally not expect avocado meal or oil present in commercial pet foods to pose a hazard to dogs and cats.

Bread Dough containing yeast
With the changing life style we make fermented food using raw bread dough made with live yeast that can be risky if ingested by dogs. When raw dough is ingested, the warm, moist environment of the stomach makes available an ideal situation for the yeast to multiply, resulting in an expanding mass of dough in the stomach. Expansion of the stomach may be severe enough to decrease blood flow to the stomach wall, resulting in the increased pressure and death of tissues. Additionally, the expanding stomach may
press on the diaphragm, resulting in breathing difficulty. Perhaps more importantly, as the yeast multiplies, it produces alcohols that can be absorbed, resulting in alcohol intoxication. Affected dogs may have distended abdomens and show signs such as a lack of coordination, disorientation, stupor and vomiting. In extreme cases, coma or seizures may occur and could lead to death from alcohol intoxication. Dogs showing mild signs should be closely monitored, and dogs with severe abdominal distention or dogs who are so inebriated that they can’t stand up should be monitored by a veterinarian until they recover.

**Corn on the cob**

Corn cob may seem like a healthy table scrap to give your dog, but unlike most vegetables, it does not digest well in a dog’s stomach. If your dog swallows large chunks of the cob, or even whole, it can cause an intestinal blockage due to its size and shape. If dog gobbled up corn cob observe for signs of trouble such as vomiting, reduced appetite, absence of faeces or sometimes diarrhoea and signs of abdominal embarrassment. In such case, take your dog to a veterinarian immediately and be careful to never feed corn cob again.

**Bones**

Feeding bones to the dog may seem a good idea as it likes and requires. It is important to remember that domestic dogs may choke on the bones, or sustain injury as the splinters can become lodged in or puncture your dog’s digestive tract, so if you choose to give your dog bones be sure to keep an eye on him while he tucks in, and avoid giving cooked bones or giving bones that are small enough to get stuck in their bowels. Eating large quantities of bone can often cause constipation, so try to monitor the amount your dog manages to consume.

**Chocolate**

Chocolate is one of the most preferential snacks of children and dog consume them along with children. Chocolate intoxication is most commonly seen around certain holidays like Holi, Deepawali, Christmas, and Valentine’s Day. But, it can happen any time dogs have access to products that contain chocolate, such as chocolate candy, cookies, brownies, chocolate baking goods, cocoa powder and cocoa shell-based mulches. The compounds in chocolate that cause toxicities are caffeine and theobromine, which belong to a group of chemicals called methylxanthines. The rule of thumb with chocolate is “the darker it is, the more dangerous it is.” White chocolate has very few methylxanthines and is of low toxicity. Dark baker’s chocolate has very high levels of methylxanthines, and plain, dry unsweetened cocoa powder contains the most concentrated levels of methylxanthines. Depending on the type and amount of chocolate ingested, the signs range from vomiting, increased thirst, abdominal discomfort and restlessness, muscle tremors, irregular heart rhythm, high body temperature, seizures and death. Dogs showing restlessness should be seen by a veterinarian immediately.

**Grapes and Raisins**

Occasionally, dogs may gobble grapes and raisins together with their owners that have recently been associated with the development of kidney failure in dogs. At this time, the exact cause of the kidney failure isn’t clear, nor is it clear why some dogs can eat these fruits without harm, while others...
develop life-threatening problems after eating even a few grapes or raisins. Some dogs consume these fruits and do not have any ill effect, but then eat them later on and become very sick. Until the cause of the toxicities is better recognized, the safest course of action ought to be avoiding feeding grapes or raisins to your dog. Dogs experiencing grape or raisin toxicities usually develop vomiting, lethargy or diarrhea within 12 hours of ingestion. As signs progress, dogs become increasingly lethargic and dehydrated, refuse to eat and may show a transient increase in urination followed by decreased or absent urination in later stages. Death due to kidney failure may occur within three to four days, or long-term kidney disease may persist in dogs who survive the acute intoxication. Successful treatment requires prompt veterinary treatment to maintain good urine flow.

**Hops**

Cultivated hops used for brewing beer have been associated with potentially life-threatening signs in dogs that have ingested them. Both fresh and cooked hops have been implicated in poisoning dogs. Affected dogs develop an uncontrollably high body temperature greater than 108 °F, which results in damage to multiple organ systems. Dogs poisoned by hops become restless, pant excessively, and may have muscle tremors and seizures. Prompt veterinary intervention is necessary to prevent death in these dogs.

**Macadamia Nuts**

It is just like almond and being used as substitute of almond. Although macadamia nut toxicities are unlikely to be fatal in dogs, it can cause very uncomfortable symptoms that may persist for up to 48 hours. Affected dogs develop weakness in their rear legs, appear to be in pain, may have tremors and may develop a low grade fever. Fortunately, these signs will gradually subside over 48 hours, but dogs experiencing more than mild symptoms can benefit from veterinary care, which may include intravenous fluid therapy and pain control.

**Milk**

Dog breeders are well aware that their large numbers of litters are lost due to lactose intolerance by pups. As dogs do not have significant amounts of the enzyme lactase that breaks down lactose in milk, feeding your dog milk and other milk-based products can cause diarrhoea or other digestive upset. If you suspect that your dog has ingested any of these items, please note the amount ingested and contact your veterinarian as soon as possible.

**Moldy Foods**

A wide variety of molds grow on food. Some produce toxins called tremorgenic mycotoxins, which can cause serious or even life-threatening problems if ingested by dogs. Unfortunately, it’s not possible to determine whether a particular mold is producing tremorgenic mycotoxins, so the safest rule of thumb is to avoid feeding a dog moldy food. Promptly remove any trash or moldy debris (road-kill, fallen walnuts or fruit, etc.) from your dog’s environment to prevent him from eating it. The signs of tremorgenic mycotoxin poisoning generally begin as fine muscle tremors that progress to very coarse total-body tremors and, finally, convulsions that
can lead to death in severe cases. Left untreated, these tremors can last for several weeks. Fortunately, they usually respond well to appropriate veterinary treatment.

**Onions and Garlic**

All close members of the onion family contain compounds that can damage dogs’ red blood cells if ingested in sufficient quantities. A rule of thumb is “the stronger it is, the more toxic it is.” Garlic tends to be more toxic than onions, on an ounce-for-ounce basis. While it’s uncommon for dogs to eat enough raw onions and garlic to cause serious problems, exposure to concentrated forms of onion or garlic, such as dehydrated onions, onion soup mix or garlic powder, may put dogs at risk of toxicities. The damage to the red blood cells caused by onions and garlic generally doesn’t become apparent until three to five days after a dog eats these vegetables. Affected dogs may seem weak or reluctant to move, or they may appear to tire easily after mild exercise. Their urine may be orange-tinged to dark red in color. These dogs should be examined by a veterinarian immediately. In severe cases, blood transfusions may be needed.

**Xylitol**

Xylitol is a non-caloric sweetener that is widely used in sugar-free gum, as well as in sugar-free baked products. In products, or signs may be delayed for several hours. Some dogs that ingest large amounts of xylitol humans, xylitol does not affect blood sugar levels, but in dogs, ingestion of xylitol can lead to a rapid and severe drop in blood sugar levels. Dogs may develop disorientation and seizures within 30 minutes of ingesting xylitol-containing develop liver failure, which can be fatal. All dogs ingesting xylitol-containing products should be examined by a veterinarian immediately.

**How to Recognize Poisoning in Dogs**

Dogs often display non-verbal cues that can help owners recognize internal illness such as accidental poisoning. Signs that your dog ingested something toxic range from straightforward clues such as fainting, vomiting, loosing fur, and seizures to subtle signs including lethargy, black stools and heavy panting. If you suspect your dog is suffering from poisoning, thoroughly examine your dog and surrounding environment and then call your veterinarian.

1. **Verify the color of your dog’s gums.** A dog's gums should resemble the dog's skin and appear pink, black or spotted. Discolored gums can indicate serious illness. Check your dog's gums by lifting the upper lip and pressing above a canine tooth with your thumb. Release your thumb then watch for a color change where you pressed. The
gum color should change from white to pink within two seconds.

2. **Examine your dog's balance.** If your dog is staggering, disoriented or dizzy, these signs might indicate dog poisoning symptoms.

3. **Look at your dog's bodily functions to check for irregularities.** Signs that your dog has ingested something poisonous include persistent vomiting or watery, loose, yellow, green or black stools. Stools should be firm and brown while urine should be yellow or clear.

4. **Listen to your dog's lungs for signs of respiratory distress.** Shallow breathing, heavy panting, or a light, persistent cough that suddenly manifests might indicate pain.

5. **Take your dog's temperature with a thermometer designed for animals.** An ideal temperature is 101 to 102.5 °F (38.3 to 39.2 °C).

6. **Watch for signs of sudden appetite loss.** If your dog stops eating suddenly, it could be a sign of toxic substance ingestion. Call your vet if your dog displays a lack of appetite for more than 24 hours.

7. **Walk around your house and yard to check for potential dog poisons such as rodent bait, anti-freeze, dead animals, mushrooms or yard chemicals.** Keep an eye out for upturned boxes, damaged prescription bottles, spilled liquids or disturbed household chemicals. If you suspect your dog ingested a poisonous product, check the back label of the packaging for warning disclaimers. Most products with toxic ingredients will list a company telephone number that customers can call for ways to recognize poisoning in dogs.

8. **Write down your dog's symptoms in detail.** Note when the symptoms started, their frequency, severity and any actions you are taking to alleviate them.

9. **Call your veterinarian.** Describe the symptoms and possible causes of the accidental poisoning. Ask if the symptoms warrant an immediate visit to the clinic.

**Suggested Readings**

1. [http://www.dummies.com/how-to/content/what-your-dogs-gum-color-tells-you.html](http://www.dummies.com/how-to/content/what-your-dogs-gum-color-tells-you.html)
2. [http://www.akc.org/public_education/healthy_dog.cfm](http://www.akc.org/public_education/healthy_dog.cfm)