



MEDIA RELEASE

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Benny finds out the hard way why the Easter Bunny does not deliver to dogs

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Popular Clovelly resident Benny the Cavoodle has had a lucky escape this week after consuming a large quantity of Belgian chocolate that may have ended fatally if his loving owner Julie Garrad did not get him to an emergency vet quick smart.

Like all dogs, Benny has a magnificent sense of smell and as Julie describes it, "late in the evening he snuck into my son's bedroom, where I had placed the open box of chocolates on his bed, and without one bit of mess or even a chocolate paw-print as evidence he ate more than half the box".

Once Julie concluded that Benny was the culprit she called the Sydney University Teaching Hospital, which now operates as a 24hour emergency veterinary service, as she knew that chocolate was highly toxic to dogs. Benny was seen immediately by the on-call emergency vet who induced vomiting and as Julie witnessed, "let's just say a large quantity of chocolate came up out of Benny who is only an 11kg dog". Benny was then observed for any following signs of toxicity and was fortunately given the all-clear to go home the same night.

Sydney University Teaching Hospital Superintendent, Dr Graham Swinney said, "toxic amounts of chocolate will be different for every dog but as little as 7grams of dark chocolate and 30grams of milk chocolate per kilogram of bodyweight can be highly dangerous. Pet owners who suspect their dog has consumed toxic amounts of chocolate or are showing signs of toxicity should contact their veterinarian immediately for prompt treatment".

Julie was extremely thankful that Benny's chocolate binge did not result as life threatening but stressed to other pet owners to think twice about where you leave your chocolate treats, especially around Easter time, as even the most responsible pet owner can under-estimate what their pet is capable of discovering.

Chocolate is made from the seeds of the tropical cacao tree which contain two main toxins theobromine and caffeine. In most chocolate compounds, theobromine is the predominant toxic component and caffeine is present in much lower concentrations. The darker the chocolate, the higher the level of theobromine. Cocoa powder and unsweetened cooking chocolate are the most toxic forms.

Theobromine cannot be easily metabolised by dogs and cats like it can be by humans but instead it builds up in their bloodstreams. Small dogs and puppies are the most prone to consuming toxic amounts of chocolate whilst cats rarely eat enough to become intoxicated.

Initial signs of chocolate toxicity are often vomiting and diarrhoea due to the high sugar and fat content. Up to twelve hours later the chemicals tend to cause a diuretic effect of excessive urination and unusual thirst. Dogs will often become over-excited and agitated. In severe cases, symptoms will develop to an increased and sometimes irregular heart rate, seizures, trembling and in some cases death.

SAVES, the new Sydney Afterhours Veterinary Emergency Service operates between 7pm and 8am Monday to Friday and 24-hours on weekends and Public Holidays. It is located at 65 Parramatta Rd, Camperdown.

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