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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Easter Holiday Hazards for Pets

*By the Vermont Veterinary Medical Association
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Easter comes early this year, and it is important to know that while it provides a host of fun treats and activities for our kids, some of these can provide problems for our pets. This includes not only the candy, but also the toys, flowers, and 'pets' such as chicks and bunnies which are often given as gifts at Easter.

For most of us, Easter treats bring to mind chocolate bunnies, marshmallow peeps, and jelly beans. These can all cause trouble for our pets. Chocolate can cause vomiting, diarrhea, hyperactivity, abnormal heart rhythm, tremors, seizures and in severe cases, death. Peeps and jelly beans can cause gastrointestinal upset if ingested. Some Easter candy may have artificial sweeteners such as xylitol, which can cause a rapid severe drop in blood sugar in dogs and cats, leading to seizures and death. The solution is to keep all candy out of reach of pets. Do not assume that your dog or cat will not get into the candy because they never have before. There is a first time for everything and you don't want to take the risk with your beloved pet's life.

Besides the candy in that Easter basket, small toys and other plastic items can be eaten by our pets, causing them to choke or cause a blockage in their intestinal tract. Fake grass may look fun to chew on and play with to our pets, but it can cause them to choke or obstruct their intestines if ingested. Cats, especially love to chew on (and swallow) long stringy things like fake grass and it can cause severe damage and even death if it gets caught in their intestines.

Easter lilies (all species) are highly toxic to cats. Even simply sniffing the pollen or eating one leaf of certain species can cause life threatening kidney failure in cats. This is even more heart breaking as often it is younger kittens (who get into everything) who are affected. If your cat chews on or eats any part of an Easter lily, call your veterinarian immediately.

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There is no doubt - bunnies and chicks are impossibly cute when they're little. The reality is that they grow up to be adult rabbits and chickens that have housing, feeding, and handling requirements that most people don't know about. Chickens are livestock, meant to provide eggs and meat: Vermont State law requires that a minimum of six chicks be purchased at a time in part to prevent neglect of individual chickens purchased on impulse during the holiday for pets or gifts. Chickens are flock animals, and don't do well individually, either. Shelters are often inundated with rabbits after Easter, and most are not equipped to take in a large number of rabbits. A serious misconception is that they can simply be released into the wild: they often starve to death or become easy prey for predators. So if you are not prepared to take care of your bunny or a small flock of chickens in the long run, stick to chocolate rabbits and peeps: they are easy to care for and don't stay around long.

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The Vermont Veterinary Medical Association (VVMA) is a professional organization of 350 veterinarians dedicated to compassionate animal care and quality medicine. For more information, visit www.vtvets.org or call (802) 878-6888.