

Valentine's Day Warning for Dog Owners

Many gifts given to loved ones on the holiday can be harmful to dogs and puppies.

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As Valentine's Day approaches, sweethearts begin to search far and wide for that perfect gift to give to loved ones on this romance-filled day. But some traditional Valentine's Day gift ideas should come with a warning for dogs.

Here are some tips from animal welfare organizations on how to have a safe and loving Valentine's Day:

While flowers are always a favorite on Valentine's Day, take caution with roses or any other flowers containing thorns, which could be potentially harmful to dogs if played with, bitten, stepped on or swallowed.

"It's all too easy for pets to step on thorny stems that fall to the ground as a flower arrangement is being created," said Louise Murray, director of medicine for the ASPCA's Bergh Memorial Hospital.

"Be sure to keep your pets clear of your workspace as you arrange your beautiful flowers, since they can develop serious infections from thorn punctures. Also, many varieties of lilies are highly toxic to cats, so if these are your Valentine's flower of choice, make sure your cats can't get near them," Murray said.

Chocolate is also a popular gift around this time of year. But this treat is one that could make your dog ill. Chocolates may contain fat and caffeine-like substances, which can potentially cause symptoms such as vomiting and diarrhea to panting, excessive thirst and urination, hyperactivity, abnormal heart rhythm, tremors, seizures and even death in severe cases.

Another potential hazard is gum or candy sweetened with the sugar substitute xylitol, which can cause a fairly sudden drop in blood sugar, resulting in depression, loss of coordination and seizures.

If you suspect your dog may have eaten products containing any of these ingredients, the ASPCA recommends immediate veterinary treatment. As a general rule, the ASPCA advises that pet owners avoid offering their animals food meant for human consumption without first speaking with their regular veterinarian.