

7 Easter Hazards All Pet Parents Need to Know About

The perils of chocolate Easter bunnies may not come as a surprise to most dog owners, but there are a half dozen other potential threats you need to know about if you share your home with a cat or dog. One little-known, highly toxic hazard has only become a serious problem in recent years.

Analysis by [Dr. Karen Shaw Becker](#)

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Today is Easter, a day to celebrate! Tomorrow will be the day after Easter, a day to celebrate that your furry family members sailed through today healthy and happy
- Reminder: Easter lilies and other springtime plants can be highly toxic for pets, especially cats
- More Easter-related hazards for pets include any product containing the sweetener xylitol, and all things chocolate
- In addition, there are many dishes on traditional Easter dinner menus that can cause major toxicity and other health problems for furry family members
- Easter basket grass and plastic eggs are also potential hazards, along with hidden hardboiled eggs that didn't get found by the kiddos and have been rotting in place for days, weeks, or months

Happy Easter! Hopefully, wherever you are in the world, the weather is sunny and warm spring days are in the forecast!

If your plans include spending the day immersed in Easter traditions, you can ensure your furry family members remain safe and healthy by keeping them far away from holiday-related hazards.

7 Easter-Related Hazards for Pets

1. **Easter lilies** — The variety of lily determines whether it is a relatively harmless or potentially deadly plant. Nontoxic varieties of lilies include the Calla, Peace and Peruvian. If your pet samples one of these plants, his upper digestive tract may become irritated, and he may drool. Types of poisonous lilies include:
 - Tiger lily
 - Asiatic lily
 - Stargazer lily
 - Casablanca lily
 - Rubrum lily
 - Day lily
 - Japanese Show lily
 - Easter lily

These toxic lilies can prove deadly for your cat. If kitty swallows even a tiny amount of any portion of these plants, including the pollen, kidney failure can result. If you suspect your cat has ingested any part of a lily, you should get both your pet and the plant to a veterinary clinic right away.

Other springtime plants that can be toxic to pets include tulips and hyacinths, daffodils, crocuses, and lily of the valley.

2. **Chocolate Easter bunnies and other chocolate goodies** — Dogs are much more often the victims of chocolate poisoning than cats, because dogs have a sweet tooth, and they're indiscriminate eaters. They make up 95% of chocolate-related emergency calls according to the Pet Poison Helpline.

Chocolate is made from the roasted seeds of the *Theobroma cacao* or cocoa tree. The seeds have certain properties that can be toxic for dogs (and cats), including caffeine and theobromine, which are naturally occurring stimulants. Both theobromine and caffeine stimulate the central nervous system and heart muscle. They also relax smooth muscles, especially the bronchial muscles, and increase production of urine by the kidneys.

Studies show dogs are especially sensitive to theobromine compared to other domestic animals. This is because they metabolize the substance very slowly, which means it stays in the bloodstream for an unusually long time. This may also be true of cats, but because kitties don't commonly overdose on chocolate, there isn't a lot of research on feline chocolate toxicosis.

Even small amounts of chocolate can cause adverse reactions in pets, and the darker the chocolate, the more theobromine it contains. Baker's chocolate, semisweet chocolate, cocoa powder, and gourmet dark chocolates are more dangerous than milk chocolate.

Other sources include chewable flavored multivitamins, baked goods, chocolate-covered espresso beans and cocoa bean mulch. White chocolate has very little theobromine and won't cause poisoning in pets. Though not commonly seen, the worst of the worst is dry cocoa powder, which contains the highest amount of theobromine per ounce — 800 milligrams per ounce versus Baker's chocolate at 450 milligrams per ounce.

3. **Easter candy, baked goods and other products containing xylitol** — The sweetener xylitol, a sugar alcohol extracted from corn and corn fiber, **birch**, raspberries, and plums, is highly toxic to dogs. It's used to sweeten a wide range of products, including sugar-free gum and mints, nicotine gum, chewable vitamins, certain prescription drugs, dental hygiene products and baked goods.

It can also be purchased in granulated form as a sugar replacement to sweeten beverages, cereals, and other foods.

Xylitol poisoning in dogs has become a serious problem in recent years. Not long ago, this sweetener could be found in less than a hundred products in the U.S., primarily limited to sugar-free gums, candy, and foods. Today it's an ingredient in a wide range of health and beauty products, food products, over-the-counter drugs and supplements and prescription medications.

Whereas xylitol was once found primarily in products not normally given to dogs, it's now in certain peanut and nut butters as well.

4. **Easter basket grass and other fillers** — The plastic grass used in Easter baskets can look tasty to pets, but it can't be absorbed into their bodies. This means it can become lodged at any point along the

gastrointestinal (GI) tract and create serious problems. If grass is a staple in your Easter baskets, consider substituting paper grass or tissue paper.

Plastic eggs, foil wrappings, and Easter toys can also be attractive to pets, so be sure to keep Easter baskets and their contents well out of the reach of your dog or cat.

5. **Easter eggs and egg coloring** — If as part of your Easter celebration you hide hardboiled eggs in your house or yard for the little ones to find, be sure to keep track of how many you hide and how many are found. You don't want your pet to discover a rotten egg in a few weeks or months and eat it.

Also keep in mind that plastic eggs can easily be cracked and produce small sharp shards that can cause injury if your pet swallows them. And finally, if you dye your Easter eggs, make sure to use nontoxic food coloring.

6. **Easter dinner** — Most types of traditional holiday feasts for humans are entirely too fatty and otherwise problematic for dogs and cats. Easter dinners are no exception, especially when they include things like honey-glazed ham, scalloped potatoes, macaroni and cheese, breads, buns, and desserts.

Additional human foods to keep away from your pet due to their potential toxicity include onions, garlic, leeks and chives; **grapes and raisins**; sultanas and currants; and macadamia nuts. Cooked bones are also a no-no, along with alcohol.

7. **Easter gardening supplies** — If you plan to begin your spring gardening and yard work this weekend, be sure to avoid exposing your pet to chemical fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides.

Espoma, a company that has been producing natural and organic products for the lawn and garden industry for 80 years, created what they call their **Safe Paws** campaign to help educate people about natural gardening solutions that keep pets healthy and safe outside.

The company's handbook, **Guide to a Safe Paws Lawn** can help you get started decontaminating your yard for the health of your pets, the rest of your family, and the environment as well.

As always, if you know or suspect your pet has eaten a potentially toxic substance, immediately contact your veterinarian, the nearest emergency animal clinic, or the 24/7 Pet Poison Helpline at 855-764-7661.

Sources and References

[Hop to It: Tips for a Pet-Safe Easter, Texas A&M School of Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences, April 1, 2021](#)
