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Fall-Winter  
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## Deliciously Toxic Foods

### WHO KNEW?

- Cats are the only domestic animals that walk directly on their claws, rather than on their paws.
- Dogs can locate the source of a sound in 6/100ths of a second using their ears like swiveling radar dishes
- When cats scratch your furniture, it is not an act of malice, but rather a way to tear off the ragged edges of the sheaths of their talons to expose the new sharp ones beneath.

The holidays are upon us, along with tasty food! Remember that these special-occasion foods can be quite harmful to our four-legged family members. We must not give into our begging professionals. Avoid giving them any human food during these festive times.

- The most commonly given treats that should never be given are rich, fatty foods like bacon, chicken/turkey skins and



- even that gravy drizzled on top of their dog food. These fatty foods can cause their digestive gland to become inflamed (pancreatitis).
- Onions and recipes high in onion powder can be toxic to them too. Onions destroy a dog's red blood cells leading to anemia.
- Another food to watch out for is grapes or raisins. This fruit contains toxins that can cause kidney failure.
- Next is the infamous chocolate, especially baking chocolate. Chocolate can affect the nervous system and cause urinary and heart muscle damage.
- Bones can cause a blockage in our pets' intestinal tract

and even splinter, which may cause a rip or tear. Be certain to dispose of these immediately.

Make certain guests know to not feed your pets from the table. You may even need to lock the pets away if too many people are there to make sure that nothing is given to them. Empty the trash as frequently as possible, especially if there are scraps in it, as they will probably contain E-coli. Even better, move your garbage can to a "hiding place" for the holidays to guarantee your pet can't get to it when you're not looking!

If your pet gets into anything suspicious call your veterinarian or your nearest

## Feline Road Trip Tips

Traveling can be stressful for cats AND their owners. Here are some helpful tips to make it a little easier for you and your furry companion.

- Get the carrier out a couple of weeks before the scheduled vet visit so that seeing the carrier becomes an everyday event.
- Use a blanket inside the carrier. Place it near where the cat rests at least a week before traveling so it will pick up its own scent.
- Leave the crate door open. Place treats and kitty's

favorite toys inside. Cats can learn to go into the carrier daily for a treat so that they will not fear the crate. Once they are going into and staying in the carrier to nap, eat treats or play, close the door and allow the cat to stay there for a short time before opening the door again. If the cat becomes distressed, open the door immediately. Sometimes a cat may see a closed crate door as a trap.

- Take care not to shake the carrier when the cat is inside. You can practice by putting a bowl of water in



the empty carrier and carrying it around the house. If the water spills

then your carrier is being shaken too much.

- Feline pheromones can help reduce stress for cats, whether in home or in the car, and can be sprayed on the carrier blanket 30 minutes before traveling. Do not spray directly onto the cat.
- Make sure the carrier is secured by a seatbelt to prevent it from rolling or sliding in the vehicle.

A BLACK CAT  
CROSSING YOUR  
PATH SIGNIFIES  
THAT THE ANIMAL  
IS GOING SOME-  
WHERE.  
~ GROUCHO MARX

# The Golden Years

Just like us, our family pets become seniors, and it's important to know how to care for their needs through this life stage. Cats and small dog breeds are considered seniors at age 7, medium breeds are seniors at age 8. Age 6 is considered geriatric for the large breeds and giant breeds are seniors at age 5.

Caring for your senior pet may mean semi-annual visits to the veterinarian rather than annual so that signs of illness or other problems can be detected early and treated. Senior exams are more in depth, and may include dental care, blood work, and specific checks for physical signs of disease that are common in older pets. Older pets get similar diseases like human seniors; their immune systems aren't

as strong as younger animals and they may be more susceptible to kidney/urinary disease, heart disease, diabetes, liver disease, cancer, joint/bone disease and senility.

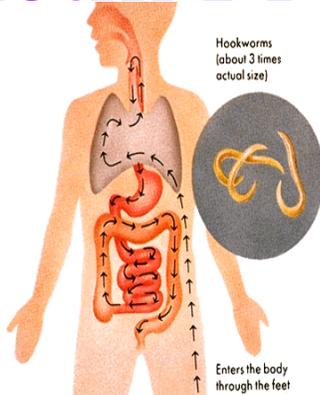
Behavior can be the first indicator of changes and illness in your older pet. You serve a critical role in detecting early signs of disease. Here are some behavior changes seen in older pets:

- Increased reaction to sounds
- Increased vocalization
- Confusion/disorientation
- Decreased interaction
- Increased irritability
- Decreased response to commands
- Increased anxiety
- House soiling
- Decreased grooming
- Repetitive activity
- Increased wandering

Changes in sleep cycle  
Environmental changes can also help an older pet's mobility and mental health. Appropriate exercise along with therapeutic beds, raised food dishes and moving the dishes to an area that avoids stairs or climbing/jumping, glucosamine/chondroitin supplements, non-slip mats and pet stairs can ease the amount of pressure and use of joints and keep them mentally active. Weight control and diet is another consideration for senior pets. Diets that are more senior pet specific are more readily digestible, have different calorie levels and ingredients that lessen the work load of the organs. A prescription diet may also be recommended by your veterinarian based on evaluation of the pet. Our pets can have happy lives in their senior years with a little help from us.

## Year-Round Prevention

It's important to understand that heartworm disease has usually reached an advanced stage by the time your pet shows signs of illness. It is possible that they may never show signs of an infection. Treatment for dogs is risky, expensive and may not be effective. The approved treatment involves the use of a product containing arsenic; your dog will be kept inactive during treatment, and you will have to keep your dog inactive for weeks afterward. Despite these measures, treatment may not be successful. There is currently no treatment for heartworm disease in cats.



It is also important to understand that certain intestinal worms cause diseases not just in your pets, but in humans too. Children

and adults with lower immune systems are most often affected by these disgusting worms.

**DOGS:** Heartgard Plus is not just for the prevention of heartworm disease! It is a monthly oral pet med used as a combination heartworm preventive and intestinal de-wormer. It kills the immature form of the heartworm, which is transmitted by a mosquito, and is also used for the treatment and control of hookworms and roundworms (which can cause disease in both pets and people).  
**CATS:** Revolution is the way to go! It is a topical (on the skin) medicine that protects our friends not only from heartworm disease, but also ear mites, fleas, and intestinal worms.

## Keeping Warm in the Cold

When the mercury drops, the following guidelines can help keep our furry friends safe.

Keep pets inside if possible. Not only will this prevent frostbite, but cats especially can freeze, become lost or be stolen, injured or killed. Cats are notorious for climbing under the hoods of vehicles to stay warm. Bang loudly on the hood to give the cat a chance to escape.

Keep your dog on a leash while out in the snow or ice, and especially during a snowstorm. Make sure your dog has ID tags with your updated information. Antifreeze is a lethal poison for dogs and cats. Also, make sure to keep rat and mouse poisons in areas

inaccessible to your pets. Remember to wipe off salt products from pets' paws.

Because they do not tolerate the cold well, potty training puppies may be more difficult. Sensitivity to cold may also affect dogs based on age, illness or breed type. Having a coat or sweater with a high collar or turtleneck with coverage from the base of the tail to the belly may help keep them comfy. For those dogs that spend a lot of time engaged in outdoor activities, increasing their supply of food, especially protein, will help keep him, and his coat, in shape.

Ask your veterinarian for suggestions if you are unsure about increasing food.

If your pet does live primarily outside, make sure they have adequate protection from the cold. Their shelter should be draft-free, large enough to stand and turn around in, but small enough to help maintain body heat. Using a layer of straw or other bedding material will help insulate the shelter. Winter also brings about cold and flu season. Medications as basic as aspirin can be very dangerous to your pets. Do not medicate your pet yourself unless under the direction of your veterinarian. Keep prescriptions and over-the-counter drugs out of animals reach.

