



## THE LABRADOR RESCUE TRUST

### ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO POISONOUS FOODS AND PLANTS TO DOGS

This Veterinary Help Sheet has been very kindly written by Robert White-Adams MRCVS, who regularly writes informative columns in The Trust's 'Labradors Forever' magazine

#### **Useful Guidance from Robert White-Adams, MRCVS**

Please remember that the mainstay of your dogs diet should be a well-balanced high quality dog food – any other foodstuffs should be considered as tips and treats – and before you reach for them please remember that the majority of Labradors are overweight – and this has very real consequences for their quality of health and their lifespan.

Secondly - there is an old saying– “everything in moderation” – and when it comes to food/toxins/poisons never was there a truer word – even essential nutrients like salt – or even water - can have fatal effects if consumed in great enough quantity.

As a general rule – your dog is safe to consume human foods in equivalent amounts to those that you eat – for example – an adult human (weighing 70-90 Kg) may eat 3 digestive biscuits (with a nice cup of tea!) – a typical Labrador weighs 30-35 Kg and should therefore only be eating a single biscuit in the same timeframe.... (although I would still rather he had none!)

There are some foods however where this rule does NOT apply – foodstuffs that if fed in equivalent proportions to a human diet will be poisonous to your dog.

First up – **vine fruits** - fresh (grapes) or dried (currants, sultanas or raisins) - there are reports of as little as 5 grapes causing fatalities in a Daschund..... which if considered empirically would equate to 15-20 grapes in a Labrador. The precise mechanism of toxicity is unknown, but affected patients usually develop vomiting, diarrhoea, lethargy and abdominal pain – progressing to kidney failure and possible death.

From fruits to vegetables – members of the **Allium family** (garlic, onion, shallots, chives, leeks) contain a toxin which attacks and damages canine red blood cells causing anaemia within a few days of ingestion. The precise toxic volume has not as yet been calculated.

**Chocolate** is a poison – the toxic element here is theobromine. This is toxic to humans too – but we are able to clear theobromine from our bodies quite quickly. In dogs this process takes three or more times longer – meaning they are much more sensitive to the effects of the toxin.... specifically excitement, vomiting and diarrhoea, muscle spasm, eventually progressing to fitting then coma then death. For a 30 Kg Labrador a fatal dose may be as little as 250g milk chocolate – although some reports state even less and it



## THE LABRADOR RESCUE TRUST

Page 1 of 5 (Veterinary Help Sheet 4 – 1 March 2010)

appears that some dogs are sensitive to even the smallest amounts of chocolate– also darker chocolate (or chocolate containing higher percentages of cocoa solids) has a greater theobromine content and is even more toxic.

At this point I must also mention the gardening product **Cocoa Mulch**. Labradors are never the brightest at working out what constitutes a legitimate “food product”! It would appear that, depending on its source, cocoa mulch can have TWICE as much theobromine per gram as the darkest of plain chocolate – and as such I would advise extreme caution using this product in any Labrador’s garden.

Whilst cocoa is probably the best known human foodstuff toxic to dogs – another nut, the **Macadamia** nut is gaining increasing recognition as a potential poison. Affected patients show signs of weakness, tremor, vomiting, fever, abdominal pain and stiffness – but the precise toxin and its lethal dose is, as yet, unknown.

In the last few years there have also been reports of poisoning in dogs caused by **Avocados** – and foods containing the artificial sweetener **Xylitol** (mainly human sweets, chewing gums, dental hygiene products and over-the-counter cold remedies). In some dogs ingestion of xylitol causes short-term, but potentially lethal surges in insulin, and in the longer term, liver damage. However, findings are still very preliminary, and to date, contrary to many websites, there is no accurate data available regarding susceptibility (whether certain ages, breeds, families, sexes, etc. are affected), toxic dose, precise effects and long term prognosis. (Although it is safe to say in some of the reported cases the lethal dose was well within the range to which a Labrador eating a pack of chewing gum would be exposed – and therefore extreme caution with such products is strongly urged!)

It is important to remember that until recent years the answer to ‘what is poisonous to dogs’ would have been “just onions and chocolate” – there are many foodstuffs that may appear innocuous but carry as yet unrecognised or undocumented canine toxins or poisons – our knowledge is growing all the time – vets are now fortunate to have access to VPIS (Veterinary Poisons Information Service) – an offshoot of a human medical toxicology unit in London (and the source of information for most of this document). VPIS study, collate and centralise data and case reports - and the result is a steadily growing list of potentially toxic human foods....

.... so remember – stick to the dog food – and if you must stray – everything in moderation!



## THE LABRADOR RESCUE TRUST

Page 2 of 5 (Veterinary Help Sheet 4 – 1 March 2010)

### **PREVENTING POISONING**

Keep all medicines out of reach – preferably in a locked kitchen cupboard.

Keep human and veterinary medicines separate.

Never give dogs medicines intended for human use - only medicines prescribed by your vet.

Do not allow dogs access to foods intended for human consumption.

Keep house plants and floral displays out of reach.

Restrict access to cleaning, DIY and car products (eg fuels, antifreeze, white spirit and oils).

Prevent access to gardens where pesticides or fertilisers have recently been used, especially slug pellets and rodent baits.

Keep pesticides/herbicides in a safe and inaccessible place – away from all pets.

Never leave buckets or watering cans full of mixed chemicals.

Do not allow dogs to drink from ponds/puddles that appear oily or otherwise polluted.

Be careful not to leave plant bulbs lying around.

### **WHAT TO DO IF YOU THINK YOUR DOG HAS BEEN POISONED**

Remove dog(s) from source of poison (protecting yourself if necessary).

Contact your vet for advice immediately, especially if your dog is unwell, and be ready to provide information on when, where and how poisoning occurred, as well as the quantity consumed.

If instructed to go to the practice, take a sample of the poison and the packaging with you. It is always helpful to know the quantity consumed.

If the skin is contaminated then wash thoroughly with water.

Do not try to make the dog vomit – unless you are instructed to do so by your vet.

Do not wait and see how the dog is, always act immediately even if the dog initially shows no symptoms.

The dog should always have easy access to drinking water.

### **Possible Symptoms from ingestion of a toxic substance may include:**

Abdominal pain, Anaemia, Asphyxiation, Collapse, Coma, Cramps, Depression, Dermatitis, Diarrhoea, Dilated pupils, Disorientation, Dizziness, Drooling, Excitability, Fever, Gum inflammation, Hallucinations, Heart Failure, Hyperactivity, Increased thirst, Irregular heartbeat, Kidney failure, Laboured breathing, Lethargy, Loss of balance, Oral irritation, Painful tongue, Rapid breathing, Respiratory failure, Seizures, Shock, Skin, irritation, Sore lips, Staggering, Swollen mouth, Tremors, Upset Stomach, Vomiting, Shock Death, Weakness



## THE LABRADOR RESCUE TRUST

Page 3 of 5 (Veterinary Help Sheet 4 – 1 March 2010)

### COMMONLY KNOWN POISONOUS SUBSTANCES TO YOUR DOG

**This list is NOT a complete listing of all poisonous products to your dog. Also your pet may have a sensitivity or allergy to a plant that is not on this list, resulting in toxicity. The toxicity level of each item and the symptoms will vary according to the amount consumed and may affect individual dogs in different ways from mild upset to severe illness – so do consult your veterinary surgery for further guidance.**

#### **Foodstuffs**

Alcohol, Bread dough, Chewing gum and sweets containing Xylitol, Chocolate, Cocoa, Fat, Fried foods, Liver, Macadamia nuts, Salt, raw Salmon/Trout (from the Pacific Northwest which can carry a parasite), Tea and Coffee (containing Caffeine), Turkey skin, Vine fruits including Currants, Raisins and Sultanas, Walnuts

#### **Fruits and Vegetables**

Apple pips, Apricot stones, Avocados (skin, flesh and stone), Cherry pips, Chives, Cornstalk, Eggplant (all parts except fruit), Garlic, Grapes, Leeks, Mushrooms (that are poisonous to humans are also toxic to dogs), Nutmeg, Onions, Peach stones, Pear pips, Plum stones, Potato skins (green or sprouting), Shallots, Sweetcorn cobs, Tomatoes

#### **Flowers, Plants, Shrubs and Trees**

Alfalfa, Almond, Aloe Vera, Amaryllis, Apple (leaves and stem), Apricot, American Yew, Asparagus Fern, Azalea, Baby's Breath, Balsam Pear, Bird of Paradise, Boxwood, Buttercup, Caladium, Calla Lily, Castor Bean, Ceriman, Cherry (leaves and stem), Christmas Rose, Chrysanthemum, Cineraria, Clematis, Cordatum, Corn Plant, Cotoneaster, Creeper, Crocus, Croton, Cuban Laurel (Ficus), Cyclamen, Daffodil bulb, Devil's Ivy (Philodendron), Dumb Cane (Dieffenbachia), Dracaena, Dragon Tree, Easter Lily, Elephant's Ear (Colocasia), Emerald Fern, English Ivy, English Yew, Fiddle Leaf Fig (Ficus Lyrata), Foxglove, Fuchsia, Geranium, Holly berries (Ilex), Honeysuckle (Lonicera), Horse chestnut twigs, leaves and conkers, Hyacinth bulb, Hydrangea, Indian Rubber Plant, Iris root, Ivy, Japanese Plum, Jasmine, Kalanchoe, Lily of the Valley, Lillies, Marijuana, Matrimony Vine, Mistletoe (Viscum album), Morning Glory, Mother-in-Laws Tongue, Narcissus, Nephytis, Nightshade, Oak (Acorns), Oleander, Onion, Peach (leaves), Pencil Cactus, Peony, Periwinkle, Plumosa Fern, Poinsettia, Poison Ivy, Poison Oak, Pothos, Potato Plant, Pot Mum, Primrose, Pyracantha, Rhododendron, Rowan (Sorbus aucuparia), Saddle Leaf Philodendron, Spider Mum, Split Leaf Philodendron, Swiss Cheese Plant, Tomato Plant (green fruit, stems and leaves), Tulip bulb, Umbrella Plant, Vine, Virginia, Weeping Fig, Western Yew, Wild Cherry, Wisteria, Yew



## THE LABRADOR RESCUE TRUST

Page 4 of 5 (Veterinary Help Sheet 4 – 1 March 2010)

### Miscellaneous

Aftershave, Algae, Antacid tablets, Antifreeze, Aspirin, Artificial sweeteners, Batteries, Bleach, Blu-tack, Boric Acid, Brake Fluid, Chalk, Charcoal, Cigarette butts, Cleaning fluids, Coal (real or artificial), Cocoa mulch, Coins (£2 coins and 2 Euro coins), Cut-flower/houseplant food, De-icer, Deodorants, Deodorisers, Detergents, Disinfectants, Drain Cleaner, Dye, Expanded polystyrene, Fire extinguisher chemicals, Firelighters, Folic acid, Fuels, Fungicides, Furniture Polish, Garden bonemeal, Glues, Hair colourings, Herbicides, Homemade playdough, Human medicines, especially Ibuprofen and Paracetamol, iron tablets or products containing zinc, Insecticides, Kerosene, Laxatives, Lead, Matches, Metal polish, Moth Balls, Nail varnish and remover, Nicotine chewing gum, Nicotine patches, Oils, Oral contraceptives and hormone replacement therapy tablets, Paint and removers, Perfumes, Perming solutions, Petrol, Phenol, Rat poison, Rubbing Alcohol, Rust removers, Shoe Polish, Silica gel, Sleeping pills, Slug Pellets, Soap, Suntan lotions, Tar, Tinsel, Turpentine, Wax candles and crayons, White spirit, Woodstains

The Trust wishes to extend their most grateful thanks to Bobby White-Adams for his invaluable contribution to our rescue work.

The introductory part of this help sheet has been written by Robert White-Adams MRCVS. Robert has extensive experience working in mixed and small animal veterinary practice ..... and anything to do with Labradors. He got his first and now sadly missed TLRT dog in 2001. Robert opened his own veterinary practice in 2008 which welcomes all pets, but especially Labradors.

Robert White-Adams MRCVS, Practice Director, Companion Care Weston-super-Mare Ltd,  
Inside Pets at Home, Unit 2B Gallagher Retail Park, Weston-Super-Mare, North Somerset BS23 3YY  
T: 01934 418004 E: [wsm@companioncare.co.uk](mailto:wsm@companioncare.co.uk) W: [www.companioncare.co.uk/wsm](http://www.companioncare.co.uk/wsm)

These Information Sheets are intended to serve as a guideline to new homes and foster homes. They are the result of many years of experience from our helpers and we hope that they provide a useful insight. Please note that these are only guidelines and The Labrador Rescue Trust, its helpers and officers make clear that it is the responsibility of each home/foster home to recognise the needs of their dog and to react to those needs. The Trust, its helpers and officers cannot be held responsible for the behaviour of any individual dog.

THE LABRADOR RESCUE TRUST COMPANY

Registered Charity Number: 1088198

© The Labrador Rescue Trust Company 2010

(Company Limited by Guarantee), Registered in England Number: 4145991

Registered Office: The Old Mill, Park Road, Shepton Mallet BA4 5BS

[www.labrador-rescue.com](http://www.labrador-rescue.com)



**THE LABRADOR RESCUE TRUST**

Page 5 of 5 (Veterinary Help Sheet 4 – 1 March 2010)