

Spring Time!!

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Ah, spring. It is nice to have a little color after a long winter. Easter and springtime decorations (and edibles) liven the scenery, but also pose a potential hazard to pets.

Who knew that plastic Easter grass could be dangerous, even deadly? Spring is a great time to take an inventory of potential pet hazards. It's better than the alternative of spending time at the veterinary hospital.

Here is are a few Quick Tips on what to watch for this spring:

- **Easter Lily (and related Lily plants):** The Easter Lily is a common finding this time of year. These plants, and related plants in the lily family, are highly toxic to cats if ingested.
- The first signs seen are vomiting and lethargy, and if untreated, may progress to kidney (renal) failure and death. Please call your veterinarian immediately if you suspect that your cat has eaten any part of a lily plant.
- Another spring flower often used in cut flower arrangements, daffodils, are also toxic to cats.
- **Easter grass:** Cats love anything that moves. This stuff moves easily in the breeze, makes interesting sounds, and, for some cats, it is simply irresistible and must be eaten. Stringy things like Easter grass or tinsel at Christmas, pose a deadly threat if ingested, creating something called a Linear Foreign Body.
- The first signs seen, aside from the material being visible from the mouth or anus, are vomiting or straining to defecate and a painful abdomen. Trying to pull out visible grass or string is *not* recommended, as this can cause more damage if the piece is long and trapped far inside the body. Call your veterinarian if you suspect that your cat has sampled the Easter grass. While Linear Foreign Bodies are more common in cats, dogs may also ingest non-food material, and the same rules apply.
- **Chocolate:** This is more of a dog hazard, as many dogs have a sweet tooth, a great nose, and the determination to find chocolate -- hidden or not. The toxic components in chocolate are *theobromine and caffeine*, and the level of toxicity is based on the type and quantity of chocolate consumed.
- Different types of chocolate have different amounts of theobromine and caffeine; dark chocolate contains the highest concentrations and white "chocolate" contains the least. Early clinical signs are vomiting, diarrhea and trembling.
- **Xylitol:** It is important to note that xylitol, an artificial sweetener used in many candies, chewing gums and baked goods, is potentially very toxic to dogs and ferrets.

