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news release

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How to Keep your Pets Healthy and Safe During the Coming Holiday Season

Newton, NJ – Dr. Don Costlow, President of the Newton Veterinary Hospital (NVH), the largest veterinary hospital in Sussex County, says that while the holiday season is a time of peace, joy and goodwill, it can also be a time that presents certain dangers to the family pet.

The most important thing to remember is that “people food” is not designed to be consumed by dogs and cats. Giving your pet a rich, high-fat holiday “treat” that you might enjoy, can actually make them quite ill. Fatty foods can cause pancreatitis in pets, a severe disease that requires hospitalization to treat.

Chocolate, coffee and tea contain a substance that causes cardiac problems and nervous system disorders in pets, including seizures and gastro-intestinal upset. Unsweetened and dark chocolate contain even more of this substance. But when it comes to life-threatening holiday dangers, the most lethal by far, is alcohol.

Often, pets are kept confined until the end of a party and then are let out, running around the room, drinking half full glasses of alcohol. This can be fatal and every year, hundreds of dogs die from alcohol poisoning.

Other things to look out for and keep in mind during the holidays:

- Many holiday plants are poisonous, so make sure to keep them away from your pets. Holly causes digestive upset, Mistletoe causes digestive upset and heart problems, and Poinsettias cause blistering of the mouth and digestive upset.
- If you have a cat, consider tying your Christmas tree to something nearby to secure it. Cats often try to climb the tree to get at the ornaments and end up knocking the tree over.
- Christmas tree tinsel, holiday gift ribbons and strings are frequently ingested by cats, which causes a linear foreign body obstruction that requires surgery to treat.
- Make sure that batteries lying around for new toys and other gadgets, aren't ingested by your pet. They are toxic and can cause intestinal obstructions.
- Macadamia nuts contain a toxin that can affect a pet's nervous and digestive system.
- Potpourri contains oils that can be toxic if ingested.
- **DO NOT GIVE PETS AS GIFTS.**

Dr. Costlow explains, "Before you start to think about giving a pet as a gift, you need to remember that a pet is not a toy. Pet ownership is a serious ten to fifteen year commitment that requires love, patience and the proper home environment. It should never be made as an impulse purchase or to 'surprise' someone. If you really want to give someone a pet as a gift, I strongly urge you to discuss it with them first."

About Newton Veterinary Hospital

The Newton Veterinary Hospital (NVH) is the first and only, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week (including holidays) emergency and well care veterinary hospital in Sussex County. NVH has 13 doctors and over 70 staff members to ensure that the most up to date, comprehensive pet care is available around the clock. In addition to providing the very best in veterinary care, we offer a number of other services, including: Expert grooming at our Pet Salon; A Bed & Breakfast Hotel for dogs and Cat Condos for cats while owners are away; A Dog & Puppy Day Care Center and a competitively priced Retail Store. For more information please visit www.newtonvet.com; call (973) 383-4321; or contact Dr. Don Costlow, Owner and President of Newton Veterinary Hospital, at info@newtonvet.com.

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