



Vets issue chocolate warning to pet owners ahead of Easter

The UK's leading emergency pet emergency service, [Vets Now](#), will see a 50% surge in calls at Easter as worried pet owners battle with concerns over chocolate poisoning.

April, which is National Pet Month, represents one of the busiest months of the year for Vets Now who will deal with tens of thousands of pet emergencies at its pet emergency clinics and hospitals throughout the UK.

These stats chime with a report from the British Veterinary Association (BVA) last Easter which found that three in five vets working in daytime practices treat pets for chocolate poisoning during the Easter holidays.

According to research analysts, shoppers spend an estimated £325 million a year on Easter eggs — with almost three-quarters of the population buying at least one.

But these extra chocolate treats in our homes can present a danger to our pets. As Dr Laura Playforth, leading vet at Vets Now, explains: “Chocolate contains a poisonous chemical called theobromine which is highly toxic to both dogs and cats. The level of toxicity depends on the amount and type of chocolate swallowed, with dark chocolate and cocoa powder being the most dangerous. Small dogs and puppies are most at risk from theobromine poisoning due to their size and weight.”

Dr Playforth continues: “The effects of [chocolate poisoning](#) in dogs usually appear within 12 hours and can last up to three days. First signs can include excessive thirst, vomiting, diarrhoea and restlessness. These symptoms can then develop into hyperactivity, tremors, abnormal heart rate, hyperthermia and rapid breathing. In severe cases, dogs can experience fits and heartbeat irregularities and some cases can result in coma or death.”



To help worried pet owners deal with suspected chocolate poisonings in their pets, the emergency vet has developed an online [chocolate toxicity calculator](#) to work out whether your dog has eaten a potentially toxic amount.

Dr Playforth continued: “Owners who suspect their pet has eaten a dangerous amount of chocolate should not wait for signs or symptoms to appear before they contact a vet. Instead, they should telephone their vet immediately or, out of hours, their nearest Vets Now pet emergency clinic.”

Vets Now has also revealed that 48% of pet owners do not actually know what to do when they are faced with an emergency.

Dr Playforth continued: “It’s essential you’re aware of what to do when faced with a pet emergency, especially when it’s out of hours or your local vet may be closed for spring bank holidays. Whilst we are always here to give your pets the best possible care in the event of an emergency, we would like to help in any way we can to prevent these emergencies from ever happening in the first place.”

Easter is a wonderful time for the whole family, but follow medical advice to make sure you don’t spend your Easter break at the emergency vets. You can visit Vets Now’s dedicated [online pet care advice](#) section for more detailed information. **Head of veterinary standards at Vets Now, Dr Laura Playforth’s shares her top tips here:**

- Dogs, in particular, have a keen sense of smell and can easily sniff out sweet treats, so make sure any chocolate goodies are stored securely out of reach of inquisitive noses to avoid an emergency trip to the vet.
- There is a toxic ingredient in chocolate called theobromine (a bit like caffeine) which is poisonous to dogs. It’s naturally found in cacao beans. The amount of theobromine typically depends on the type of chocolate. Darker, purer varieties and cocoa powder for drinking chocolate tend to have the highest levels but it’s also found in milk chocolate.
- Some dogs will try anything to get their paws on chocolate so keep bins firmly closed, as well as shopping bags containing Easter eggs well out of reach. Be careful when unloading shopping from the car that your dog doesn’t jump into your boot when your back is turned!



- Don't ignore symptoms up to 24 hours later. Symptoms typically occur between four and up to 24 hours after your dog has eaten chocolate, though assessment and treatment may be required immediately.
- Vets Now has developed an online [chocolate toxicity calculator](#) for dogs to work out whether your dog has eaten a potentially toxic amount.
- If you suspect that your dog has eaten chocolate, don't delay in contacting your local vet. The quicker your pet gets veterinary advice and treatment, the better. Your vet will want to know how much chocolate your dog has eaten and what type. If possible, keep any labels and have the weight of the dog to hand.
- It's good to have a mapped out plan in case you ever have a pet emergency. Vets Now has a generic [pet emergency plan](#) thought through for you.
- Always keep your local vet emergency contact details on your phone, along with your daytime vet practice, so you know who to call in an out-of-hours emergency.

Vets Now is open through the night, seven-days-a-week, and through the day and night on weekends and bank holidays such as Easter, to treat any pet emergencies that may occur when your daytime practice is closed. All of Vets Now's [61 clinics and hospitals](#) have a vet and vet nurse on site at all times.

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For media enquires contact Gail Chalmers on gail@gailchalmers.com or 07919411402

Vets Now notes to editor:

- Vets Now was established in 2001 and is the leading provider of emergency veterinary care for companion animals in the UK.
- With 24/7 Pet Emergency Hospitals in Glasgow, Manchester and Swindon, and 59 out-of-hours clinics nationwide, Vets Now is committed to delivering a responsive emergency and critical care service for cats, dogs and other small animals.
- Vets Now also partners with more than 1,400 veterinary practices across the UK to provide their clients with a seamless out-of-hours emergency care service.
- Vets Now employs over 1000 staff.
- Vets Now remains at the forefront of emergency veterinary care through its commitment to clinical excellence and training, employing many of the country's top Emergency & Critical Care Specialists.

