

Easter! Colorful decorations, flowers, and baskets of goodies are probably filling your house this weekend. Beautiful flowers, chocolate Easter bunnies, potlucks and BBQ- there are many fun and delicious accessories to this special time.

However, the things you love can be potentially dangerous to your pets.

Here are a few of the items to watch out for this weekend and throughout the spring:

Springtime Allergies: People with allergies know how uncomfortable this time of the year can be, but your pet could be suffering as well. Signs of possible allergies in your pet are sneezing, wheezing, itchy or red skin, and watery eyes. Talk to your vet about diagnosing and treatment.

Foxtails: These may look seemingly harmless but they can be a dog or cat's worst enemy. Foxtails can embed in fur and eventually work their way into the skin where they cause painful abscesses and infection. They also get lodged between toes and are can be inhaled through the nose. Any of the circumstances means a trip to the vet for your pet and possible surgery.

Lilies: If ingested even a small amount can be toxic to cats leading to kidney failure. Lily of the Valley can affect the heart. Other toxic plants to watch out for: azaleas and rhododendron.

Chocolate: Dogs and cats are both negatively affected by theobromine, the compound found in chocolate. This is a stimulant comparable to a caffeine high for people. For dogs and cats it is toxic, causing vomiting and diarrhea. If ingested in large amounts it will cause rapid heart rate, irregular heart rhythm and seizures.

Easter grass: Cats and puppies love to play and chew on things. Be careful not to let this stringy, plastic grass be a meal for your little ones. It can cause vomiting and intestinal obstruction. Otherwise known as a linear foreign body, surgery to remove the object causing the obstruction can be very expensive.

Playdough: This common item children find in their Easter baskets is poisonous to pets. The problem with playdough is the amount of salt it contains. Salt toxicity is a severe condition that results in neurologic problems such as brain swelling, seizures and incoordination.

Eggs (real or plastic): If ingested is another potential linear foreign body. Egg shells or pieces of plastic eggs can cause major problems to the inside of your pet. These and any other objects with sharp edges may cause tearing of the wall of the esophagus, stomach, or small intestine.

Grapes: Be careful with your fruit salad, grapes can be fatal. It only takes a few grapes to cause kidney damage in your dog.

Please avoid the urge to buy your children bunnies, chicks or ducks this Easter. Impulse animal purchases usually end up with the animal being re-sold or surrendered at the shelter. These animals need specialized care and require a big commitment. Chicks and ducks are not pets, an average home cannot provide adequate space and structure for them. If you are not ready to take on the

responsibilities of owning these types of animals, your children are surely not ready. Instead of buying a live chick or bunny, opt for a stuffed animal. These are just as cute without the mess, germs, and commitment. If your kids are set on seeing the real thing, plan a trip to the zoo or check into local farms that may have petting zoos onsite.