

What can poison your pets

TOXIC PRODUCTS

Pet owners are mostly aware chocolate can be lethal for cats and dogs, but there are other sinister products lurking in our homes we may not be aware of.

PETstock vet Dr Sasha Nefedova says the best way to keep our pets safe is to educate ourselves on what household items are toxic or hazardous.

"Most people know chocolate isn't good for dogs (and cats) but many people don't know that grapes, raisins - including those in baked goods - and onions can also be

toxic," Nefedova says.

"Fatty cuts of meat can also lead to issues with digestion - remembering a small piece of fat can be the equivalent of a large burger to a

small (pet). Toxic chemicals we use in the house are also a problem when they are accessible to our pets. Snail pellets left out in the garden can easily be picked up if your dog roams free and can be very dangerous.

"Also, remember most human medications are toxic to (pets) and have been specifically designed to be more palatable. For example, most ibuprofen (Nurofen) tablets for people have a sugar coating, making them easier for us to swallow but also potentially delicious for your pets.

"Always keep medications out of reach of children and pets."

Nefedova says if you are not sure about a product, stick to this rule: "If it was designed for animals, it's probably OK, and if it's designed for humans, exercise caution."

"If your pet does eat something, remember to stay calm,

call your vet and always keep the packet of what has been consumed," she says.

The Australian Animal Poisons Helpline charity says it has had increased calls relating to pets ingesting fertiliser.

It says common household plants, such as lilies, can be deadly.

Australian Animal Poisons Helpline 1300 869 738



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FOUR months legs the new norm

IT'S CRUCIAL TO GET THE DIET RIGHT EVERY STEP OF THE WAY IN YOUR DOG'S LIFE

GROWING PAINS

VANESSA CROLL

Like many Aussie families in 2020, the Rossers increased their headcount by one furry friend and with the new addition, comes a lifetime of responsibility.

For mum Jenny, as well as ensuring their newest member, 10-week-old miniature pinscher Rusty, feels comforted and loved, getting her nutrition requirements right for this early stage of life has been a priority.

"At the moment we know she needs a special puppy diet for the next 18 months ... then it will change as she gets older," Jenny says.

Understanding the importance of a balanced diet appropriate to your dog's age will give them the best chance of being happy and healthy, says PETstock vet Dr Danni Dusek.

"This is because their nutritional needs continue to change over their lifetime," she says. "Feeding

inappropriate or unbalanced diets can lead to many health problems in our canine family members."

So what are these stages and what should you know?

THE PUPPY STAGE

Dusek says the puppy stage is arguably the most important nutritional stage of a dog's life. "Their nutrition must be tailored to support their growth, their developing immune and digestive systems, as well as brain and muscle development," she says.

"It is really important the diet our puppies are fed is also appropriate to their size in order to support an appropriate growth rate. Small breeds will complete their growth at around 10 months of age, whereas large or giant dog breeds can continue to grow to up to two years of age.

"Having the right balance of vitamins and minerals, particularly vitamin D, calcium and phosphorus is vital to support healthy bone development and mineralisation."

THE ADULT STAGE

"Adult desexed/neutered

dogs require a significant decrease in calories compared to when they were growing puppies," Dusek says.

"It is important to get an appropriate diet for each stage of life to ensure you are getting the right amount of calories to minimise the risk of becoming overweight but without missing out on important nutrients. Supporting their de-

