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## **Stuff Your Turkey Not Your Dog -- Thanksgiving Safety**

While the traditional Thanksgiving dinner can be unhealthy for us humans with all the fat, sweets, and over indulging, it can be out right dangerous for your dog.

Overeating and dining on high fat leftovers can cause disorders that can easily become vet emergencies. Make sure to keep the counters cleared and don't let unsupervised dogs in the kitchen. Stealing a stick of butter can be dangerous. Keep them from getting access to the garbage where they may find turkey bones. Turkey bones when cooked become brittle and shatter into little razor blades inside your dog's stomach and intestines. Even the string that tied the turkey legs, if eaten, can get tied around the internal digestive organs. Chocolate is bad for dogs, and eating just an ounce of baker's chocolate or baker's cocoa can be fatal to small dogs.

My own dog, Lizzie, is a little sneak and once stole a cheese cake off our counter at Thanksgiving. While pet sitters were taking care of her last year she stole an entire turkey carcass with about 4 lbs of meat still on it, and the pet sitters did not realize it until she brought it back in through the dog door, cleaned of all of the meat.

Below are common problems, disorders and symptoms caused from eating the wrong holiday foods.

**Gastritis** -- this can be caused by overeating, eating spoiled food, garbage, ingested bones, or foreign objects. Symptoms are diarrhea and vomiting. If the vomiting persists for more than an hour or two, if the diarrhea persists more than a day or two, or there is blood in the stool or vomit, your dog should see a vet at once. If your dog shows mild symptoms, withhold food for 24 hours and then reintroduce it with small servings of boiled chicken and cooked rice for 2-3 days. You can also add a little yogurt. Kaopectin with probiotics., purchased online or through your vet might also help. Do not give human over the counter medication for indigestion. Some are not good for dogs.

**Bloat** -- also know as Gastric Dilation, Torsion, Volvolus, or GDV, this is a vet emergency and the dog needs care within hours, even minutes of showing symptoms. It is caused by too much gas or fluid building up in the stomach and swelling. Once swelled, the stomach may turn on its axis and cut off blood supply to major organs. Symptoms include retching, trying to vomit but can't, pacing, heavy panting, and pale gums. The stomach will feel very hard. Excitement and stress that goes along with the holidays can make bloat more likely. I know of a Gordon Setter who had to be rushed to

the vet on Christmas night. He survived, but mortality rate from bloat can be up to 50%. Also exercise within a couple hours before and after eating can bring on bloat. Eating too fast can bring it on as well. Feed your dog in a quiet place, and if your dog gets stressed and eats faster around your other dogs, feed him in a quiet place away from the other dogs.

**Pancreatitis** -- This can be caused by overeating and by eating too much fat. I saved a client's dog one time by observing the symptoms of pancreatitis when she thought her dog had gastritis from getting into the garage. I insisted she get her dog to vet emergency, and the dog almost didn't survive. The emergency vet said it was the worst case he'd seen in 24 years of practice. The early symptoms can be mild and similar to gastritis, so it is often not taken seriously enough. I was concerned because the dog appeared in a lot of pain, was drinking a lot of water and then vomiting, had a fever, the stomach area was very rigid, and the dog would not eat.

Be aware of the dangers facing your dog during the holidays and exert a little precautionary management. Be thankful for your dogs and all the joy they bring to your life. Have a safe and happy holiday with your dogs.

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