

Pet Talk Tuesdays – 11/5/2019

Nick Rusch:

And now time for our Pet Talk Tuesday. Dr. Marty Greer joins us from Veterinary Village in Lomira, and we're going to talk about a few topics related to your pets this morning. Doc, how you doing?

Dr. Marty Greer:

I'm doing great, thanks.

Nick Rusch:

Always a pleasure to have you here. I always learn so much when you're here, and we learn so much about our four-legged friends. And as we go through the seasons, it seems like every time of year, there's something that we need to worry about, and you brought up things not to let your dogs eat. The first thing I thought of was, as we're coming off of Halloween here, just a week ago, and there's probably plenty of it still in the house.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Oh yes.

Nick Rusch:

Halloween candy.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Halloween candy. Yeah. And the biggest problem, of course, is chocolate. Some of the other candies aren't so bad. But the other part of that is when they eat the wrappers.

Nick Rusch:

And they will.

Dr. Marty Greer:

They will. You would be surprised at the number of dogs that eat the wrappers along with the candy. I don't think they even taste it when they do it, because they go down still in the foil wrapper.

Nick Rusch:

It smells so good.

Dr. Marty Greer:

It must. It just must be fabulous.

Nick Rusch:

It smells so good.

Dr. Marty Greer:

But I've had them come all the way through, Hershey's kisses come all the way through still wrapped in foil. It's really disappointing to see that. The flag is usually gone that said Hershey's on it. And the tip of the kiss is a little blunted, but they do come through still recognizable, shall we say.

Nick Rusch:

That's the funniest thing that's been on this show today, and this is not a comedy show, but nonetheless.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Well, and the sad thing is I'm not making it up.

Nick Rusch:

I know. How could you?

Dr. Marty Greer:

Exactly.

Nick Rusch:

It wouldn't be half as funny if you were making it up.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Exactly. So we have dogs that will eat the entire Halloween basket full of candy, and they can get pretty sick, from just that volume of sugar. And of course sugarless gum and sugarless candy are dangerous. And then chocolate, we all know about chocolate.

Nick Rusch:

Well, let's just talk. Let's talk about chocolate for a bit, because I think people sometimes still, and this amazes me, because by this point we should all know this, but dogs simply cannot metabolize the chocolate. They can't do it.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Well, they can metabolize it, but the problem is when they do, that the caffeine type product that's in it is more toxic to dogs than it is to us. So it is a stimulant to us, as well, but not at the same level. And the darker the chocolate, the more toxic it becomes.

Nick Rusch:

Which is so odd, because in humans, and we always talk about the similarities, but in humans, the darker the chocolate, the better it is for you. And what about kitties with this stuff?

Dr. Marty Greer:

It's the same, but cats tend not to take those opportunities quite as often.

Nick Rusch:

Well, what happens? And I know you've probably seen the comic strip Get Fuzzy, and then the running joke is that Satchel eats everything in the house because he's a dog and he just eats everything. But I hate to say it, and I'm sure it may be a little bit breed specific. Some may tend more toward it, but others don't. But generally speaking, dogs will eat just about anything, especially if it smells good.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Yes. Anything smaller than their head, they'll try to swallow. And sometimes they'll try things bigger than their head, so it's shocking what dogs will try to get into or eat.

Nick Rusch:

So you've got to keep this stuff away from them.

Dr. Marty Greer:

You do. You do. And the faster you run towards them to try and get it away from them, the faster they swallow.

Nick Rusch:

Oh sure. They see you coming. They're not dumb.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Oh no, no. They know exactly that he who eats the fastest gets the mostest. So they gulp it right down, even if they don't taste it.

Nick Rusch:

My daughter's dog has a tendency to patrol around the two year old's high chair.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Oh yeah.

Nick Rusch:

The dog's not dumb. He's sitting there looking, because he knows there's going to be some spillover and he knows who gets it.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Yeah, exactly. And I used to think my kids were neat eaters till we'd go to a restaurant, and be like, oh, I guess it's not all going into you. And if you've got a really great dog, it never even hits the floor.

Nick Rusch:

No, of course not.

Dr. Marty Greer:

They make sure it's mid-air before they, you know, they don't ever miss it. And they know which side the hands are waving over.

Nick Rusch:

So let's say we come home and clearly the doggie has been at the treats. What do we do?

Dr. Marty Greer:

Well, it depends on how recent. If it's been eight hours, it's probably already too late to make them vomit. If it's been a shorter period of time, we can induce vomiting. We do not recommend using peroxide to induce vomiting in dogs or cats. There are a lot of references online if you Google it, or you go to the poison control websites. You may find information about using peroxide, but we've had one dog that ended up with an air embolism in her brain from peroxide to induce vomiting. And we have one cat that ended up dying of gastric ulcerations from peroxide.

Nick Rusch:

Oh no.

Dr. Marty Greer:

So it's serious. So I'm not a fan of that, but there is a great drug that your veterinarian has called apomorphine. It is not a happy kind of morphine. It's the kind of morphine that you give it either under the third eyelid in the eye, which kind of freaks people out. It works that way, but you can either put the powder under their eyelid, or you can give it by IV injection. And within five to seven minutes, we've got very effective vomiting. So whether it's a sock that the dog ate yesterday, or a new pile of candy, or ibuprofen, or whatever, we can induce vomiting for a lot of those patients, and very successfully help to start decontamination. Now, depending on the amount of chocolate or what else was with it, like

chocolate covered raisins, we've had one of those, too. Those are even worse, because you've got the double whammy of raisins and chocolate.

Nick Rusch:

Oh, raisins are no good for dogs?

Dr. Marty Greer:

Raisins and grapes are toxic to dogs.

Nick Rusch:

I did not know that.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Yes. There's a percentage of them, we don't know what the characteristics are, but some percentage of dogs will end up with kidney failure and die from it.

Nick Rusch:

Oh my God.

Dr. Marty Greer:

So yeah, so a lot of people think that grapes, a grape for me, a grape for the dog. A grape for me, a grape for the dog. And it's really not okay to do that. They're not homegrown. They're not store bought. We don't know what the exact variety or combination of things are, but there's been hundreds and hundreds of dogs that have died from grape and raisin toxicity that we know it's poisonous to dogs to ingest those. So we're really careful making sure that dogs don't get into those.

Nick Rusch:

Now, you mentioned that, just so we kind of have a scope here, you mentioned some candies aren't as bad. None of it is good, but are there some we needn't worry about quite so much?

Dr. Marty Greer:

Yeah, things like Skittles, that are fruit flavored. They're not going to be toxic. They can get a sugar high from it if they eat enough, and based on body weight, the littler the dog, of course, the smaller amount it takes to get them a little zingy. But it's the chocolate and the darker chocolates that are problematic. Peanut butter is fine. Sugar, those aren't encouraged, but they're not going to be toxic.

Dr. Marty Greer:

But the wrappers are one of the more dangerous parts, too, because some of those wrappers can end up, if they don't slide through, can end up causing obstructions. So in a small dog, that can be a problem. And little dogs will eat things that will get caught in their small intestine or their stomach more easily than a bigger dog. They can swallow things that they can get down into their stomach, but once it's in the stomach, it doesn't pass well.

Nick Rusch:

Sure.

Dr. Marty Greer:

In kids, it's the other way around. Children, if they can swallow something, it gets into their stomach, it comes through. I just found this out a couple of months ago, because I have a client that's a pediatric surgeon. And she said on a daily basis at Children's Hospital, she was called in to push a coin into the child's stomach that was caught in their esophagus.

And once it's in the stomach, it comes through. So they didn't have to retrieve it. Dogs are the other way around. If it gets into their stomach, it doesn't mean it's coming through. It means it may cause a blockage.

Nick Rusch:

Wow.

Dr. Marty Greer:

So we have to be careful.

Nick Rusch:

A lot of dangers out there that you just don't know.

Dr. Marty Greer:

And dogs are just, they're in self-destruct mode most of the time. They don't really understand the consequences of their behavior. So they're just out there having a good old time, and it doesn't always work out well.

Nick Rusch:

Yeah, and what I always say, we always laugh about, my wife and I, because I love dogs and I see a lot of them when I'm out riding bike. It's like, he's got that dopey dog look on his face, that sweet dopey dog look, and you know exactly what I mean by that.

Dr. Marty Greer:

I sure do.

Nick Rusch:

And I'm a sucker for it every time.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Yeah.

Nick Rusch:

And I know as dog owners, people are, too. It's hard to refuse the doggie anything.

Dr. Marty Greer:

It is, but you do have to be thoughtful about it. And different dogs have different medical conditions, which can also change things. And coming up to Thanksgiving, one of the big concerns is the dog getting into the trash, the garbage, after you've discarded the turkey carcass.

Nick Rusch:

Now we start talking about bones and this gets problematic.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Yeah, they do. So if the dog chews them up, they're probably okay. But a lot of dogs, again, will swallow them.

Nick Rusch:

Just wolf them down.

Dr. Marty Greer:

They will, just as fast as they can. So be careful when you're discarding the turkey, or those plastic devices that are used to hold the legs together.

Nick Rusch:

Oh yeah.

Dr. Marty Greer:

They'll eat those, because they taste like turkey.

Nick Rusch:

I believe that.

Dr. Marty Greer:

And they cause obstructions again. So they can cause some pretty serious problems. And the amount of fat for some dogs, if they have a tendency to be dogs that are affected by pancreatitis, which is inflammation of the pancreas, then that can cause us problems if they get into the gravy or the fat, or any of those things. So you just need to be really careful how you're discarding things and what access the dog has to the gravy, all those types of things. So if the dog is looking at you at the table and you want to give them a little bite of turkey with no skin and a little bit of potato, that's okay, but don't let them clean up the entire amount, and do take the trash seriously. So get it out where the dog can't get to it and tear it up and eat things that you'll regret later.

Nick Rusch:

Generally speaking, and we were probably violators of this back on the farm, because all of our leftovers went to the animals in one way or another. We used to do a lot of bread and milk, the dogs and cats, stale bread. I mean, one day old bakery. But generally speaking, dog food is for dogs, people food is for people.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Yeah. You know, until the 1940s, there was no commercially available dog food, but since the forties, dog food has evolved considerably. And now we've gotten to the point that it's very, very specific, based on breed, based on health conditions, age, weight, all those things. So there's some really great pet foods on the market, and there's no way that clients can duplicate a well balanced canine or feline diet at home the way that the pet food manufacturers have, that have spent millions and millions and millions of dollars developing foods, test feeding them, determining what the appropriate nutrients are. They probably are better nourished than we are, because their complete and balanced diet is probably a lot more complete and balanced than mine.

Nick Rusch:

Because once you do that, once you get to that point, once the science has been involved and the research and the money and the time, and it's been put into the product, we buy the product for them. So we're choosing for them. What we choose for ourselves...

Dr. Marty Greer:

Not always the same science behind it.

Nick Rusch:

It could be three Reese's and a can of Pringles for supper. You never know, you know?

Dr. Marty Greer:

Yeah. I watch people at the grocery store. I think it's fascinating. It's a great study in human behavior.

Nick Rusch:

It really is. It really is.

Dr. Marty Greer:

But we've gotten to the point we have these brain diets for dogs. I mean, they literally improve their brain function.

Nick Rusch:

Cognitive memory, the whole thing?

Dr. Marty Greer:

Cognitive memory, seizures, all kinds of stuff can be managed nutritionally. And it's shocking, because it's like, well, if they know that about dogs, then why aren't we doing some of those things with us, as well?

Nick Rusch:

Well, and I have at least part of the answer for that, because for many years we interviewed a woman who worked for the Wisconsin Dairy Council, and she always had statistics close to hand. And one of them is the number one determiner of what people will buy, number one is still, it's not the economics, it's taste. If it tastes good, people will buy it and people will eat it.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Right. And dogs seem to have overcome that, because if you look at some of the things dogs eat in your backyard, for example. It's hard to imagine that goose droppings are tasty, but they must be if you're a dog.

Nick Rusch:

I don't know. I don't know. I don't know. And I'm not so sure I want to find out.

Dr. Marty Greer:

No. And there's a lot of things I will never try.

Nick Rusch:

I'm okay with that. I'm all right.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Right. The doggie toothpaste we sell, I'll taste that, but some of the other things...

Nick Rusch:

How is it?

Dr. Marty Greer:

It's actually sweet. It doesn't taste like poultry. It says poultry. It says seafood. It just tastes sweet. Yeah.

Nick Rusch:

That's all they offer? Seafood flavored toothpaste for doggies.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Yes, and for cats. Yeah, I know. It's hard to believe. But anyway, getting back to the holidays, we just need to be careful and be thoughtful about things. We're coming up to Christmas and you start putting things under the tree, wrapped gifts and things like that. And again, if they're food treats, the dog may find them and unwrap them while you're at work and diligently work to find their way into the package. So I just think it's important that people think about the access that their dogs have to some of those things.

And the other thing we do, not that it's for toxins, but it does work for certain things like pieces of plastic or pieces of other things that dogs shouldn't eat, like diamond rings and pens that they chew up, canned spinach does a pretty good job, not in every case, but in a lot of cases, of wrapping around those little sharp objects, like the chewed up pen, and helping those to pass through their intestinal tract to avoid surgery. So big things that cause blockages won't work. But smaller things, I encourage all my clients to have two cans of spinach on their shelf at home, not fresh, not frozen, just good old canned spinach.

Nick Rusch:

Canned spinach.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Yeah. You mix it with a little bit of chicken baby food, a little bit of ground beef. Most dogs will eat it. And it does a pretty good job of getting some of those smaller pieces to come through without going in for emergency surgery.

Nick Rusch:

Wow, talk about helpful hints.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Yeah, it's cool.

Nick Rusch:

This is why we have the doc in. You're not going to find this stuff everywhere. You think you're going to get the old canned spinach trick? You won't find it on the internet.

Dr. Marty Greer:

I don't think so, but it works great, and it's a good thing to have around. So have two cans, one that you can feed now and one for the next day, because you're going to need more than one can if your dog is a big dog, and it's usually retrievers, Labradors, Golden Retrievers, those are the typical dogs that ingest things that they really shouldn't.

Nick Rusch:

It's crazy. And it's like raising a child, isn't it? Because you simply have to be constantly vigilant.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Except they never grow up. They're 12 years old, they still eat hangers, dolls, they still do all those things.

Nick Rusch:

But I think that when you put things kind of on your list, because when we have people over at the house, you know, it's chaos at the holidays. There's a million things going on. You're running around, and you just have to constantly keep your mind on that child that doesn't grow up in your house.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Right.

Nick Rusch:

And just make sure, like you say, you're disposing of everything properly.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Yeah, and you've got to be vigilant. One of my first cases when I got out of veterinary school, I worked at the emergency clinic in Milwaukee, and on New Year's Eve, we had a dog that came in that acutely started to show neurologic signs. The clients had had a party at their home, and the dog started to stagger and they didn't know what was really wrong with her.

Nick Rusch:

Oh my God.

Dr. Marty Greer:

So they brought her in, and we carefully questioned them about her history and what was going on at the home at the time it happened. And they swore there was no way that this dog could have gotten into anything that was inappropriate. The dog vomited shortly after they left her for hospitalization. And my technician said, "White wine, there's white wine in the vomit." So they went back home. They asked some people at the party, and they indeed had put their glass of wine on the floor, innocently, didn't mean for the dog to drink it. The dog ended up pretty inebriated. She survived, but we did do a blood alcohol level on her. You can do those on dogs too, just to verify.

Nick Rusch:

I'm sure it was monstrous.

Dr. Marty Greer:

It was. But we just wanted to verify that we were on the right diagnosis, because that made a big difference on whether we made a referral to a neurologist or not. And it turned out she recovered nicely, but even little things like that. And sometimes people think it's kind of funny, or we're starting to see more and more marijuana ingestion, and it's not. But most of the time it's innocent. Occasionally, people do it deliberately. So we just have to be really aware that our dogs have no judgment. They don't know what's right and wrong. They don't know what's good and bad for them. So we really do have to protect them against themselves.

Nick Rusch:

I've got to tell you, we just did almost a 25 minute segment, and the doc is working without notes. This is all off the top of her head. It's very impressive. Very impressive indeed. And I know much of your information you have close to hand and close to top of mind, but nonetheless.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Comes from many years of experience.

Nick Rusch:

Yeah, well, I know, I know. I know. And I know that if we had the time, we could probably go for a couple hours, too, if we really had to. And once again, you guys are always available for all of these emergencies, for whatever's going to come up with the pets, whether it's ingesting something or no matter what it is. So let's give everybody the contact information.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Sure. So our phone is (920)-269-4000. And that phone is answered 24 hours a day by certified veterinary technicians. So if you have a question about whether your dog needs veterinary care, or if you can wait until morning, they'll help you make that decision. They're awesome. They're a company based out of Chicago that answers for us. Our address is at the corner of 41 and 49, just South of Fond du Lac, the big red building on the Southeast corner, across from Quad

Graphics. And we are there seven days a week, Monday through Thursday until eight o'clock in the evening, Friday and Saturday till six, and Sunday noon to six. So we're very available, and it's smallanimalclinic.com.

Nick Rusch:

Okay. Veterinary Village in Lomira, Dr. Marty Greer. Doc, it's always a pleasure. It's always a great deal of fun. And I always learn a lot. And for me, I want to learn a lot. So I hope everybody else does, too. And once again, keep those pets safe. Be careful of how you dispose of things. That's really the key.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Exactly.

Nick Rusch:

And if there's anything you would think that they may get into, and believe me, if you think they may get into it, they're going to get into it. So keep it out of their way and keep it up, up, up and way away. All right, thanks, doc.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Thank you.