Press release template: Chocolate poisoning at Easter

You can tailor this press release using regional survey statistics and local details in order to promote your own practice and services to your local media.

Regional statistics showing the percentage of vets that saw cases of chocolate ingestion in pets last Easter are listed at the end of this document for you to copy and paste.

For more advice on undertaking local media activity, download the BVA media guide for vets.
[Your practice name]

For immediate release

Contact: [Name of practice contact to deal with press enquiries, with phone number and email]

[Local area/vet practice name] vets issue Easter chocolate warning for pet owners

[Name of your practice and location of practice eg. Nice Vets in Highbury, London] is urging pet owners to keep chocolate treats safely away from their pets’ reach this Easter, as findings released by the British Veterinary Association (BVA) reveal that in [regional area], [your regional area statistic from list]% of vets saw at least one case of chocolate poisoning in pets over Easter holidays in 2017.

Chocolate can be highly poisonous to pets, with dogs most commonly affected. It contains theobromine, a naturally occurring chemical found in cocoa beans, which, while fine for humans, is harmful to dogs and other animals. The level of toxicity is dependent on the type of chocolate – dark chocolate and cocoa powder is most toxic – and the size of the dog, with smaller dogs and puppies being most at risk.

Although awareness about chocolate poisoning is increasing amongst pet owners, BVA’s figures show that the majority of vets still see urgent cases because chocolate treats have not been secured out of reach.

[Name, job title] from [practice name] said:

[Insert practice quote here, highlighting the message you really want to get across. Include – after clear permission from owner – any case studies from your own practice. And don’t forget to tell local people to visit their local vet if in doubt/need of advice]

British Veterinary Association President John Fishwick said:

“Easter is great fun for the whole family, but chocolate treats for humans can be poisonous for our pets. Dogs have a keen sense of smell and can easily sniff out chocolate, so make sure it is stored securely out of reach of inquisitive noses to avoid an emergency trip to the vet.”
“If you suspect that your dog has eaten chocolate don’t delay in contacting your local vet. 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.”

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.


ENDS/

Notes for editors

1. [practice name] was set up by [founder’s name] [number of years since founding] years ago and is situated at [practice address]

2. BVA is the national representative body for the veterinary profession in the UK. We represent the views of over 17,000 members on animal health and welfare, and veterinary policy issues to government, parliamentarians and key influencers in the UK and EU.

3. BVA’s Voice of the Veterinary Profession survey is a bi-annual survey of vets drawn from BVA members and carried out by the independent research company, Alpha Research www.alpharesearch.co.uk. The Voice of the Veterinary Profession captures the profession’s views and experiences by asking questions about animal health and welfare, public health, and trends in the veterinary profession. The panel is broadly representative of the BVA membership, which is largely in line with RCVS membership. For more information about the survey, please visit www.bva.co.uk/voice

4. The first Voice of the Veterinary Profession survey following Easter last year (May 2017) asked companion animal vets if they saw any cases of chocolate poisoning in companion animals over the 2017 Easter holiday period. 372 UK vets completed the survey.

5. The Animal Welfare Foundation (AWF) is BVA’s animal welfare charity committed to improving the welfare of all animals through science, education and debate: their Pets and Poisons leaflet can be downloaded at: www.bvaawf.org.uk/pet-care-advice/pets-and-poisons or copies can be ordered for practice waiting rooms by
Emailing bva-awf@bva.co.uk

6. For more information, please contact [practice contact details].

Voice of the Veterinary Profession: regional Easter hazards statistics

The BVA Voice of the Veterinary Profession survey in May 2017 asked companion animal vets if they saw any cases of chocolate poisoning in companion animals over the Easter period. On average across the UK, 62% of vets had seen cases of chocolate poisoning. The regional results in England by percentage of vets who had seen any cases of chocolate ingestion were as follows:

- East of England 59%
- East Midlands 67%
- London 47%
- North East 64%
- North West 65%
- South East 74%
- South West 73%
- West Midlands 44%
- Yorkshire and the Humber 69%

The results in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales were as follows:

- Northern Ireland 63%
- Scotland 52%
- Wales 61%