

Northwoods Humane Society –Deanna Persson, President

Food! Cookbooks! Showing love through food! My favorite sport is going out to dinner with friends and family. But that activity has not happened for us this past year and I really miss it. This has not deterred my love of eating, but has pushed me into reading my many cookbooks and planning for meals that show a little more effort and thus love for Mike and the dogs.

Well, I do not cook for our dogs or cat, but I do share our food with them. I know you are not supposed to feed the dogs from the table – but I do – they love it and I enjoy sharing with them. (I hope Regina Petty, our NHS trainer, isn't reading this.)

I am now planning for our Valentine Day dinner! Alecia Austin, the NHS Shelter Manager suggested I include information about food that may be harmful for our pets but good for individuals. (provided by the ASPCA). We all love our pets but we have to protect them from the common ways individuals show us love.

While chocolate and flowers are traditionally considered romantic Valentine's Day traditions, dogs, cats and other pets who nibble on their owner's gifts definitely won't be feeling the love. The ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center has gathered a list of common and not-so-common Valentine's Day toxicities to help you provide the best possible care to your patients.

Chocolate: Get ready for the next wave of chocolate cases, since Valentine's Day is a biggie! Often chocolates contain additional fillings which increase the risk of pancreatitis but may limit the amount of actual chocolate ingested. While not common, keep an eye out for raisins and xylitol in chocolate.

Flowers: Roses are certainly the iconic flower of Valentine's day, but mixed bouquets are also common. Unfortunately, [lilies that can cause acute kidney injury in cats](#) (Lillium sp. or Hemerocallis sp.) are commonly used in mixed bouquets. Don't trust the affected pet's owner to identify flowers in the bouquet—instead, request a picture or have the owner call the store/company where the flowers were purchased and get a list of what was in the bouquet. And if you're not good at identifying flowers, there are many apps and websites with pictures of common flowers used in bouquets.

Marijuana: With the legalization medical and recreational marijuana in most states, marijuana exposure in animals is on the rise. Marijuana is also found in products that pets may be more interested in: chocolates, baked goods or even lotions are becoming common.

Onion & Garlic: A rich, romantic meal for two sounds like the perfect idea for Valentine's Day, at least until a pet jumps on the counter and starts eating the diced onion. While one bite may not be a problem, in cats 5 g/kg or more and in dogs 15 g/kg or more of onions has resultant in clinically significant hematologic changes.

Alcohol: What goes better with a good meal than a glass of wine? Problems can occur, however, when a glass is left accessible and the pet laps it up. While the grapes in wine have not proven to be an issue for dogs, the alcohol certainly could cause problems for them.

Gum: Gum containing xylitol may be a good bad-breath cure, but it's also one of the most common sources of xylitol toxicity for dogs.

To add to the confusion, the amount of xylitol in different brands of gum can vary widely—and it's found in many other products as well.

Perfume: No one wants to smell bad for the big date, but when the little Chihuahua licks her owner's skin after a recent application, is there reason for concern? Perfumes are primarily composed of essential oils and alcohols which in small amounts may cause the pet to wonder what it was they just tasted, but not likely much more.

A way to show love for animals that need help is to donate food to "Love Four Paws". This food drive is being sponsored by Armstrong Insurance and Ovarian Cancer Symptom Awareness (OCSA). Dry and wet cat and dog may be dropped off at Armstrong Insurance on Highway 27 South, or the NHS Shelter on Highway 77 and O'Brien Hill Road or food may be purchased and left at Hayward Feed and Seed on 63 South or MarketPlace – downtown Hayward. The "Love Four Paws" pet food drive will run now through February 19th. For more information contact Armstrong Insurance at 715-934-4459.