

CURRENT AFFAIRS.....

Several years ago I was called out on Christmas day to see Annie, an exceptionally large Labrador Retriever. Annie had not been born large, it was not 'in her genes', but she had become this way because of her huge appetite. Nothing was safe within a large radius around her; if she could get to it she would eat it. Now Christmas is often a happy hunting ground for dogs with such a voracious appetite; people get distracted and leave food around, forgetting about shutting doors as they normally might. Cakes and chocolate can be left on sideboards, or under Christmas trees, within easy reach of the canine vacuum cleaner!

Annie was not well. She had eaten the whole Christmas cake the night before and was in complete disgrace. She had a bad case of sickness and diarrhoea and was just lying on the floor, not moving, turning her nose up at any further offers of food. Her owner panicked at this, she had never turned down food before, and rang me.

Unfortunately Christmas cake contains large quantities of dried grapes in the form of raisins, sultanas and currants. These can be highly toxic to dogs and even small amounts can cause kidney failure in some cases. Some dogs seem able to eat large quantities without any effects, while others develop kidney failure after as little as a few grapes or a small handful of raisins. Unfortunately for Annie she was very sensitive to their effects and blood tests showed her kidneys were badly affected.

Annie was admitted to the surgery and given intravenous fluids and other drugs. She stopped producing urine altogether for several days before she started to rally. After several more days, having a lot of fluid infused in to her, her waste products in her blood fell almost back to normal. On new years eve she was able to go home, to a very relieved owner, who promised to never let such a thing happen again!

There have been reports of cats being similarly affected so it is possible they are also susceptible.

Foods to watch out for at Christmas include; Christmas cake, Christmas pudding, Stollen and mince pies! So make sure your dog is safe this Christmas and keep it well away from all such delicacies. Then both you and your pet's can relax and have a very happy Christmas!

Jon C Power BVSc Cert AVP(vetGP) MRCVS; jonpower@somertonvets.co.uk