**For immediate release**

**Common Valentine's Day Gifts Pose Threats to Household Pets**

*Veterinary emergency doctors warn of chocolate and flower-related pet emergencies on Valentine's Day*

**CHICAGO, ILL., February 9, 2015. . .** St. Valentine’s Day treats can be deadly to pets, warn veterinarians at Chicago Veterinary Emergency & Specialty Center ([www.ChicagoPetEmergency.com](http://www.ChicagoPetEmergency.com)).

“Each year around Valentine’s Day, our emergency room treats cats and dogs who have gotten into flowers and candy that were gifts for their owners,” said Chicago Veterinary Emergency & Specialty Center Supervising Veterinarian Dr. Jerry Klein. “Chocolate and lilies are especially problematic as they can cause serious health problems or even lead to a pet’s death.”

***Chocolate***, a perennial Valentine's Day favorite, contains a chemical called theobromine that is toxic to dogs. Small amounts can lead to nausea, diarrhea, vomiting, increased heart rate, seizures, heart failure, and even death.

The darker the chocolate, the greater the concentration of theobromine. Baking chocolate, dark or unsweetened chocolate in small amounts can be poisonous for even a large dog. Milk and white chocolates are less toxic, but can still cause illness, particularly in small dogs. Immediate veterinary care is recommended for any dog that consumes chocolate.

Chocolate is also toxic to cats, but poses less risk, as cats are generally uninterested in eating chocolate. Dogs, however, will happily eat as much as they can get their teeth on! Small, tough wrappers like the kind found in many Valentine's Day chocolates also present a hazard, as they can lodge in throats or digestive tracts, requiring surgery to remove.

***Lilies***, including all members of the *Lilium* and *Hemerocallis* genera, are highly-toxic to cats and often fatal when consumed. All parts of the plant, as well as the water that lily flowers have been stored in, can cause poisoning, even in small amounts. Lily poisoning can lead to vomiting, lethargy, loss of appetite, dehydration, tremors and seizures. It is usually fatal unless treated within the first 18 hours following ingestion. There is no direct antidote, but treatment to purge the toxins and IV therapy can help a cat survive.

Commonly used bouquet lilies that are toxic to cats include stargazer lilies, tiger lilies, Asiatic lilies, day lilies and Japanese show lilies. Most commercial florists will, on request, produce lily-free bouquets that are safe for cats.

“Lilies are so toxic to cats that we suggest cat owners not allow lilies in their home,” said Klein. “The risk is too great.”

If you suspect that your pet has ingested either lilies or chocolate, contact your veterinarian immediately, or an emergency veterinarian if your regular vet is unavailable.

**About Chicago Veterinary Emergency and Specialty Center**

**(**[**www.ChicagoPetEmergency.com**](http://www.ChicagoPetEmergency.com)**)**

Chicago Veterinary Emergency & Specialty Center provides advanced emergency, critical and specialty care for cats and dogs. Each year, the center treats more than 11,000 cats and dogs in its emergency room, and thousands more are cared for by veterinary specialists.

Staffed by highly trained specialists and equipped with the latest technology, Chicago Veterinary Emergency & Specialty Center is always open – 24 hours a day, every day of the year. In addition to emergency veterinarians and staff, the facility offers board-certified veterinarians who specialize in cardiology, dentistry, dermatology, diagnostic imaging, internal medicine, neurology, oncology, ophthalmology and surgery. This state-of-the-art facility includes ultrasound and MRI equipment, specialized surgical suites, a blood bank, specialized oxygen cages, heart monitors and more. A cancer and rehabilitation center is located across the street. Chicago Veterinary Emergency & Specialty Center has been providing emergency care for cats and dogs since 1978.

**Media Availability**

Veterinary doctors at Chicago Veterinary Emergency & Specialty Center are available for interview and comment. Arrangements can be made for video to be shot at Chicago Emergency & Specialty Center facilities.

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