

On The Health Front

By Kay McGuire, DVM, MS

As this newsletter reaches you in December or January, much of the country is experiencing extreme weather issues. We automatically consider the extreme cold as the most threatening problem to our pet's health. The cold weather threatens human and animal physical safety due to hypothermia or frostbite, but it also drives our pets into shelter where they can be exposed to another host of potential health issues.

Tis The Season

I think most of us are aware that holiday plants and sweets can cause gastrointestinal issues and sometimes even death for dogs. Dark chocolate, xylitol found in chewing gum, raisins, grapes, onions, and turkey skin can all lead to problems. For those owners which wish to imbibe during the holidays, please be sure that your glasses are out of reach of your pets. Alcohol toxicity is a real thing in pets too!

While Christmas trees shed needles, packages most often have ribbon, and ornaments break and are hung with nice little wires which may be appealing. Personally, I have removed objects you would not imagine from dog and cat bellies. Electrical cords may also be tempting, especially to young animals.

If the weather includes ice and snow, be sure to cover the dog's feet to prevent slashed paw pads and the exposure to the rock salt on the ice. Cats like to sleep under the hoods of



warm car engines so announce your approach by knocking on the fender.

While each of these things seems logical, it never hurts to reacquaint yourself with these dangers.

Grants 2018

Changing the topic to how the WFA granted funds in 2018, \$20,000 was pledged to a grant through Cornell University. Dr. Elia Wojno is leading the study trying to discover the genetic link to atopic dogs. If study is successful, we should be able to predict a puppy's future allergic response. This would allow breeders to make more informed decisions with their dogs at an early age. The New Zealand West Highland Terrier Club's donation to the WFA accounted for 50% of the grant. **We are in need of blood samples from both allergic and normal dogs.** Please contact me at health@westiefoundation.org for information on how to help. This grant is currently covering the cost of blood shipping.

Other grant support went through the Canine Health Foundation for studies in Lymphoma and Inflammatory Bowel Disease. Please see the article in this issue on Inflammatory Bowel Disease and how it might affect your Westie.

Lastly, for the owners that have dogs with Pulmonary Fibrosis (*Westie Lung Disease*) or have lost dogs affected with this terminal disease; there is a promising study involving a possible treatment protocol that may not only support affected dogs but also improve their condition. There is a grassroots fundraising effort to support this work through a T-shirt sale and a "Go Fund Me" drive. Please see the article in this newsletter. The WFA commends this dedication and is excited to see this study come to fruition. The link to that fund drive is:

https://www.gofundme.com/wfa-pulmonary-fibrosis-drug-study?fbclid=IwAR2MWKOwyfCh3ShyFEy1l7ptTes8F6jMXya_ccakY4CcoHirQr8bbAynKUK

As always, we welcome questions and want to hear of topics which are important to you. Please contact us through health@westiefoundation.org. I hope everyone has a safe and healthy holiday season.