

DALLAS PETS ALIVE! RESOURCE HUB

Assorted Writing Samples

Short-form educational articles written for the Dallas Pets Alive! Resource Hub, which serves as a volunteer-built encyclopedia covering the full spectrum of pet ownership, care, and rescue.

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Poisonous Foods for Cats

Cats are curious creatures, and sometimes that curiosity leads them straight to something they shouldn't eat. Some can cause mild stomach upset, while others can lead to serious illness or even be life-threatening. Here's a simple guide to help you keep your cat safe.

IF POISONED, CALL
(888) 426-4435

DANGEROUS & TOXIC

High-risk foods to never feed your cat

FOODS

- **Onions, garlic, chives, leeks** — can cause anemia
- **Grapes and raisins** — can cause kidney failure
- **Chocolate** — the darker the chocolate, the more dangerous it is. Contains theobromine, which is toxic to cats
- **Raw dough (yeast)** — can expand in the stomach and produce alcohol
- **Fatty meats and bones** — risk of pancreatitis or choking/blockage
- **Xylitol** — an artificial sweetener in sugar-free gum, candy, and some peanut butters. Can cause liver failure
- **Macadamia nuts** — can cause weakness, tremors
- **Avocado** (especially pit, skin, and leaves) — contains persin, can cause vomiting
- **Moldy or spoiled foods** — can contain mycotoxins, which cause severe illness
- **Raw fish** — may contain parasites or cause thiamine deficiency

DRINKS

- **Alcohol** — even small amounts can be fatal
- **Caffeinated drinks** (coffee, tea, energy drinks) — can cause heart and nervous system problems

HOUSEHOLD ITEMS

- **Lilies** (all parts, even pollen) — extremely toxic; can cause kidney failure
- **Medications** (human or pet not prescribed for your cat) — common cause of poisoning
- **Essential oils** — toxic to cats when ingested, inhaled, or absorbed through the skin

- **Salt** (large amounts) — can cause electrolyte imbalances and toxicity
- **Cooked bones** — can splinter and cause choking, blockage, or internal injuries

PROCEED WITH CAUTION

These foods aren't outright toxic, but they can cause problems. It's best to avoid:

- Milk and dairy
- Salt and salty snacks
- Raw or undercooked meat or eggs
- Tuna (especially in large amounts)
- Canned fish or meat with added salt or seasonings
- Nutmeg

WHAT TO DO IF YOUR CAT ATE SOMETHING DANGEROUS

If you suspect your cat has eaten something dangerous, the most important thing is to stay calm. Contact your veterinarian immediately, even if your cat seems fine. Some symptoms may be delayed. If your vet is unavailable, call a 24-hour animal poison hotline, such as:

ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center (888) 426-4435

Pet Poison Helpline (855) 764-7661

Do not attempt to induce vomiting unless specifically instructed by a veterinarian. When you call, be prepared to share what your cat ate, how much, and when.

WHEN IN DOUBT, LEAVE IT OUT

If you're unsure whether something is safe for your cat — don't risk it. Cats have sensitive systems, and what seems harmless to us can be very dangerous to them. Stick to cat-safe foods and treats, and always keep toxic items out of reach.



Poisonous Foods for Dogs

Some foods that are perfectly safe for people can be dangerous or even deadly for dogs. Some can cause mild stomach upset, while others can lead to serious illness or life-threatening emergencies. Here's a simple guide to help you keep your dog safe.

Dangerous & Toxic — High-Risk Foods to Never Feed Your Dog

FOODS

Chocolate — the darker, the more dangerous; contains theobromine, which affects the heart and nervous system

Xylitol — a sweetener in sugar-free gum, candy, and some peanut butters; can cause liver failure and dangerously low blood sugar

Grapes and raisins — can lead to kidney failure

Onions, garlic, chives, leeks — can damage red blood cells and cause anemia

Macadamia nuts — may cause weakness, vomiting, and tremors

Cherry, peach, or plum pits — contain cyanide and pose a choking hazard

Moldy or spoiled foods — can contain mycotoxins, which cause severe illness

Raw bread dough (yeast) — expands in the stomach and can release alcohol during digestion

Cooked bones — can splinter and cause choking, blockage, or internal injuries

DRINKS

Alcohol — even a small amount can cause poisoning or coma

Caffeinated drinks (coffee, tea, energy drinks) — can overstimulate the heart and nervous system

HOUSEHOLD

Medications (human or pet not prescribed for your dog) — common cause of poisoning; even one pill can be extremely toxic

Essential oils — toxic to dogs when ingested, inhaled, or absorbed through the skin

Proceed with Caution

These foods aren't outright toxic, but they can cause problems. It's best to avoid:

- ▶ Milk and dairy
- ▶ Fatty meats or trimmings
- ▶ Raw or undercooked meat, eggs, or fish
- ▶ Salt and salty snacks
- ▶ Avocado
- ▶ Nutmeg

What to Do if Your Dog Ate Something Dangerous

If you suspect your dog has eaten something dangerous, the most important thing is to stay calm. Contact your veterinarian immediately, even if your dog seems fine. Some symptoms may be delayed. If your vet is unavailable, call a 24-hour animal poison hotline, like:

ASPCA ANIMAL POISON CONTROL CENTER
(888) 426-4435

PET POISON HELPLINE
(855) 764-7661

Do not attempt to induce vomiting unless specifically instructed by a veterinarian. When you call, be prepared to share what your dog ate, how much, and when.

When in Doubt, Leave It Out

One of the simplest ways to protect your dog is to keep unsafe foods and items out of reach. If you're ever unsure whether something is safe, skip the snack and check with your veterinarian first.

Crate Training: A Simple Guide to Help Your Dog Feel at Home

Crate training can be one of the most helpful tools for setting your dog up for success — whether you're working on house training, building a routine, or helping them settle into a new home. At its core, crate training is about giving your dog a safe, quiet space that's just theirs.

Why Crate Training Works

Many dogs naturally enjoy having a cozy, den-like area to retreat to. When introduced the right way, a crate becomes a safe and comforting place, and a predictable spot to decompress and feel secure.

What Crate is Best for my Dog?

Size & fit

Your dog's crate should be big enough for them to stand up, turn around, and lie down comfortably.

Style

Wire crates, plastic travel crates, or soft-sided options can all work well. Just make sure the space feels secure, not isolating, and matches your dog's temperament. If your dog is still growing, consider a crate with a divider so you can adjust the space as they grow.

Steps for Crate Training

1

Set Up & Build Positive Associations

Set the crate up in a quiet part of the house. Leave the door open, toss in treats, or feed their meals inside to build positive associations. Fill the crate with favorite toys or soft bedding to make the space inviting. Let your dog explore the crate at their own pace.

Short Crate Sessions

Once your dog is comfortable going in and out of the crate on their own, you can start introducing short periods with the door closed. Here's how:

Begin with just a few minutes. Start with 5–10 minutes while you're nearby, then slowly increase the time as your dog relaxes.

Use a high-value treat or toy. Give them something special they only get in the crate, like a stuffed Kong or a favorite chew.

Gently guide them in. Use a treat or cue word like "crate" to encourage them. Never force them in.

Praise and stay calm. Always praise them for going in. Keep your energy calm to help them settle.

Keep it low-pressure. Don't make a big deal when leaving or returning — this helps prevent anxiety.

Make It Part of the Routine

Create a routine where the crate becomes part of daily life. Crates are great for things like naps, meals, downtime, or overnight sleep. Predictability helps dogs feel secure, especially during transitions or after adoption.

Tips for Common Challenges

- If your dog whines, wait for a moment of quiet before letting them out. This teaches that calm behavior gets rewarded, not noise.
- Never use the crate as punishment. It should always feel safe and positive.
- Go slow. Some dogs may need more time and encouragement to feel comfortable.
- Be patient and consistent. Progress might take time, but steady routines and positive reinforcement go a long way.

Intestinal Parasites in Dogs

Intestinal parasites may be tiny, but they can cause big problems. These unwelcome guests live in a dog's digestive tract and can lead to health issues ranging from mild tummy trouble to serious illness — especially in puppies. The good news? They're common, treatable, and preventable with a little know-how.

Common Types of Parasites

SIX SPECIES PROFILES — APPEARANCE, TRANSMISSION, SYMPTOMS, RISK, CONTAGION

Roundworms	HIGH RISK	Hookworms	VERY DANGEROUS
APPEARANCE Long, spaghetti-like worms. TRANSMISSION Ingesting contaminated soil, feces, or through mother's milk (puppies). SYMPTOMS Bloated belly (especially in puppies), diarrhea, vomiting, poor weight gain, visible worms in poop or vomit. RISK LEVEL High in puppies — most are born with or quickly exposed to them. CONTAGIOUS? Yes, to dogs and humans. Dogs with roundworms shed eggs in their feces, which can contaminate the environment and be ingested by other dogs or, in some cases, accidentally by humans.		APPEARANCE Tiny, thin worms that attach to the intestinal wall (not visible in poop). TRANSMISSION Contact with contaminated soil or feces, or from nursing as puppies. SYMPTOMS Bloody or dark stool, anemia, weakness, weight loss, pale gums. RISK LEVEL Very dangerous for puppies; can be fatal if untreated. CONTAGIOUS? Yes, to dogs and humans, though not directly. Humans can be infected through contaminated soil (like walking barefoot where infected poop was). Dogs contract by ingesting larvae or through skin contact with contaminated ground.	

Whipworms

MODERATE

APPEARANCE

Whip-shaped worms, hard to spot in stool.

TRANSMISSION

Ingesting contaminated soil or feces.

SYMPTOMS

Chronic diarrhea, weight loss, occasional blood in stool.

RISK LEVEL

Moderate; harder to diagnose and treat, especially in adult dogs.

CONTAGIOUS?

Humans cannot catch whipworms from dogs; however, dogs can spread whipworm eggs when other dogs ingest contaminated soil or feces.

Tapeworms

LOW RISK

APPEARANCE

Segmented, flat worms; rice-like pieces near rear or in poop.

TRANSMISSION

Swallowing infected fleas.

SYMPTOMS

Often mild and can include scooting, licking rear, and visible segments.

RISK LEVEL

Low, but uncomfortable for dogs.

CONTAGIOUS?

Yes, to both dogs and humans, but not directly. Dogs contract tapeworms by eating fleas or rodents. Humans can become infected by accidentally ingesting eggs or larvae — usually through contaminated food, water, or fleas.

Giardia

MODERATE

APPEARANCE

Microscopic and can't be seen without a lab test.

TRANSMISSION

Drinking from puddles, shared bowls, or contaminated water.

SYMPTOMS

Watery or smelly diarrhea, gas, occasional vomiting or lethargy.

RISK LEVEL

Moderate, especially in puppies or stressed dogs.

CONTAGIOUS?

Yes, to both other dogs and potentially to humans. Giardia spreads through contact with infected feces, contaminated water, or surfaces like shared bowls or toys. Humans can contract it by accidentally ingesting the parasite from contaminated hands, surfaces, or water.

Coccidia

HIGH RISK

APPEARANCE

Microscopic parasite, not visible in stool.

TRANSMISSION

Ingesting infected feces (often in kennels, parks, or from littermates).

SYMPTOMS

Watery or bloody diarrhea, dehydration, weight loss.

RISK LEVEL

High for puppies or immunocompromised dogs.

CONTAGIOUS?

Not to humans. Coccidia can spread easily between dogs (especially puppies) with contaminated feces or environments.

Treating and Preventing Intestinal Parasites in Dogs

Treatment

Prevention

If your dog has intestinal parasites, don't panic! Work closely with your veterinarian for a diagnosis and proper medication. Treatment typically involves one or more of the following:

- **Deworming medications** (oral or injectable): effective against roundworms, hookworms, whipworms, and tapeworms.
- **Antiprotozoal drugs**: for microscopic parasites like

Preventing intestinal parasites is much easier (and cheaper) than treating them. A few simple habits go a long way in keeping your dog parasite-free:

- Pick up your dog's poop promptly to reduce the chance of spreading parasites.
- Avoid standing or questionable water sources like puddles or communal dog park bowls.

- giardia and coccidia, a different class of medication is required.
- **Multiple rounds of treatment:** some parasites need several doses spaced out over time to fully eliminate both adult parasites and eggs or larvae.
- **Follow-up fecal testing:** your vet may request repeat stool samples to ensure the parasites are gone.
- **Supportive care:** in severe cases, dogs may need fluids, nutritional support, or additional medications to treat anemia or inflammation caused by the infection.
- Practice regular flea control.
- Disinfect shared items like food bowls, toys, and bedding regularly, especially in homes with multiple pets.
- Schedule regular vet visits, including annual fecal exams to catch parasites early, even if your dog seems healthy.

Tips and Tricks

- ☐ Use a calendar or reminder app to track medication doses, especially if treatment involves multiple rounds. Write down when medicines were given to keep track and avoid missed or repeated doses.
- ☐ Mask pills in treats or food to help picky eaters take medication more easily.
- ☐ Keep infected pets isolated from other dogs, especially in multi-dog households.
- ☐ Clean up accidents quickly and sanitize surfaces like crates, floors, and bedding. Consider using puppy pads to make cleanup faster and reduce contamination on carpets or hard-to-clean surfaces.
- ☐ Wash your hands thoroughly after handling your dog, especially after cleaning up feces or administering meds.
- ☐ Always wear shoes when handling cleanup or walking in areas where infected dogs have been, especially outdoors.

When treating and preventing intestinal parasites, it's crucial to follow your vet's instructions precisely. Skipping doses or ending treatment early can lead to reinfection or incomplete clearance of the parasite. But, with the right combination of vigilance, veterinary care, and preventive habits, you can keep your dog happy, healthy, and parasite-free.