

GIVE US PAWS

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Treats and your pet's diet

Hopefully, everyone with cats and/or dogs remembered to keep their pets away from Valentine's Day chocolates recently. Not every holiday can be shared with our pets, and that's a good thing. When it seems like retail stores are hunting for new reasons to draw consumers into their businesses, we don't need to create a problem for our pets.

Unlike humans, dieting is not a conscious concern for pets: they'll eat whatever they find, whenever they feel like it. So we need to keep our pets healthy by being aware of what they eat and controlling portions for them. Treats should be given sparingly so as not to reverse the benefits of a proper diet.

Yet treats can be used thoughtfully too. Through repetitive use of treats and praise, it was possible to train one of our cats to wear both a collar and a harness to go outdoors for exercise. In a similar fashion, a chronically ill pet was able to receive its medicine without too much stress, enabling a complete and probably a more swift recovery.

Choosing a treat involves some thought. Calories should be nutritious but not a substitute for a pet's regular diet. Table scraps are not a good idea because it's difficult to judge the number of calories in them as well as whether they fulfill any nutrition requirements.

Some treats are made for den-tal health or breath freshening, or for the prevention of hairballs.

Read the package information carefully before purchasing treats for your pets. There should be an analysis of the nutritional value including calorie content per serving or per treat.

Greenies Pill Pockets, which I have purchased several times for our cats, can be used as a treat. Pill Pockets are a soft treat that a pill can be concealed in, and these are available for dogs also.

Note that Greenies have dental/breath freshening treatments for cats and dogs (www.greenies.com) and also biscuits made for dogs.

A few years ago it was said that Greenies were the cause of intestinal blockages in some dogs, with some fatalities. Although Greenies have been reformulated since, it is still wise for pet owners to monitor a pet's use of hard or chewy treats to ensure that the items are being chewed and swallowed properly, to aid in their digestion.

PET PAUSE

Here we are in mid-winter and more daylight hours are coming, slowly but surely. Snow has made browsing difficult for the deer, and you'll find more squirrel and rabbit tracks over the crusted snow as animals are looking for scarce plant matter. Take care that your outdoor plants and shrubbery don't fall prey to hungry critters, and keep your garbage cans secure from marauding wildlife too.

Even your recyclable bottles and cans should be stored securely to prevent accidental injuries to animals looking for a smidgen of food. Place glass containers in a covered bin, cut plastic soda can packs open, and flatten tin cans so that none of the curious can get a head stuck in one.

Spring can't get here soon enough for our four-legged friends either!

Printing imperfections present during scanning

