

Poisons



Many people are surprised as to how many common poisons are found in our own homes and how easily a pet can be made seriously ill. The following article includes some of the more common toxins – there are many more of them but are beyond the scope of this article.

Food

Chocolate, onions, garlic, macadamia nuts, fruit seeds and stones, grapes and raisins, potato peelings, green potatoes, rhubarb leaves and green tomatoes can all be lethal if enough is ingested! Also problematic is alcohol, coffee, tea, yeast dough and xylitol (artificial sweetener).

Plants

Oleander, lily plants (especially for cats), daffodil bulbs, Brunfelsia, azaleas and lantana (amongst others) are all either cardiovascular, gastrointestinal or respiratory toxins to pets. Cycads are extremely toxic, and owners should consider removal before purchasing a new puppy.

Drugs

Ibuprofen, paracetamol, vitamins containing iron, and aspirin are all toxic. One paracetamol tablet can kill an average cat! Nicotine is also a potent poison—dogs have been killed by eating a single cigarette.

Common poisons

Obviously poisons are poisonous, but every month we get several cases of rat bait poisoning – the bait is very tasty to dogs.

Weed killers and insecticides are dangerous too and should be kept in a safe place.

Especially dangerous are some dog flea preparations that are accidentally given to a cat.

Slug or snail bait containing metaldehyde are almost always fatal after a few mouthfuls unless treated quickly. These need to be laid inside sections of pipe to prevent access by dogs and cats.

Animals

Cane toads secrete a nasty poison from glands behind their head. This can be absorbed through the gums and lips, and can cause death in as little as 30 minutes.

The Paralysis Tick is a common and deadly creature – especially during Spring. The toxin from the tick will continue to work even once the tick is removed.

Many species of snakes are potentially deadly to pets if bitten.

Miscellaneous poisons

Car radiator antifreeze (which is apparently sweet tasting to dogs), lead poisoning (for example, fishing line sinkers).

If you suspect your pet has been poisoned, pick up the phone and call a vet – day or night. Depending on the poison, clinical signs may not be apparent for hours, at which time it may be too late. Time is of the essence, especially if we can induce the animal to vomit up ingested poisons before it's too late.

This is by no means a comprehensive information sheet.

Please don't hesitate to contact your vet for more information.

