

Pawsitive Press

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Poison Prevention

By: Dr. Wade Matthews

Both dogs and cats explore their world with their mouths. We see a lot of problems with pets ingesting things that are not meant to be eaten. They do not have the cognitive function to think about the consequences of their actions. Their motto is “if it looks or smells good eat it.”

One of the most common poisons that we see in practice is ethylene glycol (anti-freeze) intoxication. This liquid has a sweet taste to it and pets love it. The chemical that lowers the freezing point of your radiator causes havoc with your pet’s kidneys after it makes them look like they are drunk. They will stumble and seem demented and sometimes will have vomiting, diarrhea or seizures. When ingested it causes the liver to change the alcohol in the anti-freeze to a solution that ultimately ends up as oxalic acid and aldehyde which are very toxic to the kidneys. The treatment for the disease if we can diagnose it soon enough is to give them intra-venous ethanol. That is why we keep a bottle of vodka at



This treatment gives the liver something else to do so it can’t work on the anti-freeze and the poison is excreted.



Some other common poisons that are caused by well-meaning owners when they give their pet a “treat” are xylitol, chocolate and grapes. Xylitol is a sugar substitute that is used in gum and candies. It causes low blood sugar in dogs which can turn into seizures and death, it does not cause problems in cats. Sorbitol and sucralose is safe for dogs but a good rule is if it says “sugar free” don’t give it to your dog or cat to be safe. Most all homes have chocolate in the form of candy or baking items. It contains methylxanthines, theobromine and

caffeine which if ingested in high enough concentration will cause increase heart rate, increase breathing rate, increase blood pressure and life threatening heart arrhythmias. Milk chocolate has much less of a poison than cocoa powder or Baker’s and dark chocolate, but to be safe no chocolate is safest. Grapes cause the same type of clinical signs as anti-freeze, but the exact chemical is still in question. Thankfully both grapes, raisins and chocolate need to be eaten in fairly large amounts to cause life-threatening problems, but please do not feel safe about knowingly given them to your pet. The number of grapes that are considered toxic seems to be getting smaller all the time. Most toxicologists say even one is cause for alarm.



Many of our owners have medical conditions of their own and need to take medicine. Many of these drugs we use in veterinary medicine, but a dogs mentality when something is dropped on the floor is “eat it fast before the mean owner takes away my

Poison Cont'd

treat.” There is a tremendous size difference in the vast majority of our pets and their owners, so dosing is quite different and at too high a dose most all medicines can cause problem. Always read the label on medication to verify that the right species is getting the right drug.



Veterinarians are very helpful in answering questions about most of the common poisons in pets and if they run into one they are not familiar with there are a few “pet poison control hotlines” that for a small fee will have a board certified toxicologist help them with the specific problem. The best way to avoid problems is for the owners to make a deal with their pets to not take each other’s food or medications!



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10 Most Common TOXINS for dogs

As reported by Pet Poison Helpline

- Chocolate
- Mouse & Rat Poisons
- Vitamins & Minerals
- Human & Pet Pain Relievers
- Heart Medications
- Anti-depressants
- Xylitol
- Caffeine Pills
- Acetaminophen
- Cold & Allergy Medicines

10 Most Common TOXINS for cats

As reported by Pet Poison Helpline

- Topical Spot-On Flea Prevention
- Household Cleaners
- Anti-depressants
- Lilies
- Philodendron
- Topical Spot-On Flea Prevention
- Human & Pet NSAIDS
- Cold & Flu Medicines
- Glow Sticks
- ADD/ADHD medications, amphetamines
- Mouse & Rat Poison

Pets & TOXIC PLANTS

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Brought to you by Veterinary Pet Insurance®

More than **700** plants produce physiologically active or toxic substances that are dangerous to dogs and cats if ingested.

Poisonous plants include



Signs of toxicity

- Racing or irregular pulse
- Vomiting
- Cold extremities
- Lethargy
- Rapid breathing

11.5M

average number of lilies sold every year in the U.S. and Canada

Last year, VPI® policyholders filed **\$8.1M** in claims for vomiting/upset stomach

Average treatment costs

Plant toxicity:	Tremors:	Kidney failure:
\$567	\$467	\$675

If your pet eats any part of a plant:

- 1 Call your veterinarian immediately
- 2 Bring a sample of the plant
- 3 Tell the veterinary staff how much your pet ingested.

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