

HOUSEHOLD POISONS:

Every winter there is an increase of pets accidentally ingesting a household item that is poisonous to them. Most pet owners know the common ones such as chocolate and antifreeze, but there are a few others that are sometimes forgotten.

CHOCOLATE

Pets are exposed to chocolate frequently. Most cases generally occur with certain holidays such as Halloween, Valentine's Day, Christmas and Easter when more chocolate is around. There are a variety of products that carry some potential hazard to your pet such as cocoa products, and cocoa bean mulches. Theobromine comes from the plant *Theobroma cocoa* and is present in chocolate, cocoa beans, cocoa bean hulls, cola and tea. The more theobromine the more toxic it is. Here is a comparison of certain chocolates and their theobromine content:



Milk chocolate: 60 mg/ounce

Baking chocolate: 450 mg/ounce

Cacao meal: 300-900 mg/ounce

Cacao beans: 300-1200 mg/ounce

Hot chocolate: 13 mg/ounce

The lethal dosage of theobromine in dogs is about 2/3 to 1 1/3 ounces of baking chocolate for every 2.2 pounds of body weight. The **first signs of chocolate poisoning** are vomiting and diarrhea, increased urination and nausea. These can progress to cardiac arrhythmias and seizures. Chocolate poisoning does not just happen in dogs, it has been documented in horses that ate cocoa bean hulls used as bedding, and

livestock fed cocoa waste products. No poisonings have been reported in cats, which is probably due to their eating habits.

If your pet eats potentially dangerous amounts of chocolate, and it has been within two hours of ingestion, call your veterinarian. There may be steps you can take at home to help remove the poison. If longer than two hours has passed, the animal may need to be seen and treated.

ANTIFREEZE

Ethylene glycol, an ingredient commonly used in antifreeze, is one of the most hazardous poisons to animals. Even relatively small amounts can cause toxicologic syndromes. Cats are more sensitive than dogs to this chemical. As little as 15 ml (one tablespoon) of 50% diluted antifreeze can be lethal to a 10-pound cat, where 65 ml would affect a similarly sized dog. These are some symptoms of antifreeze poisoning:

EARLY SIGNS (0-12 hours after ingestion and can start within 1 hour of ingestion): vomiting, ataxia or stumbling, depression, increased drinking, and increased urination.

TRANSITION PHASE (12-24 hours): the initial signs may progress to seizures or coma, or the animal may temporarily get better and then go into acute kidney failure. This temporary improvement only occurs in dogs.

LATE SIGNS (24-72 hours following exposure in dogs and 12-24 hours in cats): severe depression, coma, seizures, loss of appetite, oral ulcers and salivation.

Antifreeze poisoning is very serious, if you suspect your pet has ingested antifreeze please call your veterinarian or the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center immediately. Here are some helpful reminders to help reduce the risk of your pet ingesting antifreeze.

1. Check your driveway and under your car regularly for leaks.
2. Always clean up spills immediately.
3. Store containers securely away from children and pets.
4. Never allow your pets near your vehicle when you are changing antifreeze.
5. Some antifreeze/coolants, such as Prestone® and Low Tox™, are made with propylene glycol, which is less toxic to pets and safer to use around them.

RODENTICIDES

During the fall and winter months mice and rats start heading indoors to get out of the cold. That means homeowners are putting out rat poison to help control the problem. Unfortunately rat poison can also harm your pet and most would find it to be a tasty treat.

Anticoagulants are the most common type of rodenticide produced and used in the United States. Anticoagulant rodenticides are available as grain-based pellets, wax blocks, dusts, and tracking powders and in a variety of other formulations. Dogs allowed to roam may be more likely to encounter rodent baits. These baits may be improperly placed in areas pets have access to, or rodents may drag baits into these areas. Pets that live in rural or urban areas where

rodent control is frequently used are also more likely to be exposed. An animal owner may be unaware if they live in a rental home that the landlord has placed rodent control, or just moved into a new home where a rodenticide has been placed in the past.

Here are **signs** of an exposed animal: signs usually develop in one to seven days after ingestion most are nonspecific signs such as lethargy, loss of appetite, lameness, and coughing. Any type of bleeding can occur including bleeding from the nose, rectum, or from a wound.

The **prognosis** for animals with anticoagulant rodenticide poisoning is variable depending on the stage of illness at the time when it is discovered. If found before clinical signs develop, the prognosis is good to excellent. Otherwise, the prognosis is guarded to good, depending on the type and severity of the bleeding.

ICE MELTS

Ice melts are a common use during the winter. It is sprinkled on your driveway, walkway, sidewalks, and even roads to help melt the ice. What some do not realize is they pose a potential threat to your pet. The major component of ice melt is salt. Some pets may like the taste of salt and ingest it, others may roll in it, and even walking on it may cause a problem.

Exposure of ice melt to the skin is not as serious as ingestion. Skin irritation may occur, this may present by your pet licking at a certain area, especially the pads of the paw. In some cases cracked or open sores do occur. Ingestion is by far a more serious problem. Ice melt, when ingested, can throw off the electrolyte balance in the body. The most common

signs of ice melt ingestion include vomiting, diarrhea, salivation, depression, decrease in appetite, tremors, disorientation, increase in drinking, seizures and death. If you suspect your pet has ingested a large quantity of ice melt please contact your veterinarian. If you do call, please have the ice melt ingredients available. This will help determine what treatment is necessary.

Ice melts can be dangerous, but it is a situation that can be avoided. Keep your ice melt in a sealed container. Clean up any spills that have occurred, wash your pet's feet when they come in from outdoors, or give your pet a bath if they have rolled in it.

There are now products on the market, such as SafePaw™, that are safe and are recommended if you have pets.

LIQUID POTPOURRI

Liquid potpourris are popular household fragrances, especially during the holiday season. What you may not know is that they can be a potential poison. Potpourris are warmed in simmer pots that use a candle or electric heat. Cats are more frequently exposed to liquid potpourris by directly ingesting the potpourri from the simmer pots or from spills. They may also rub against leaky bottles or simmer pots, or they could spill the containers on themselves and ingest the material when they groom. There are two main ingredients that make up liquid potpourris, essential oils and cationic detergents, both of which are toxic to cats.

Essential oils are volatile oils extracted from plants. They are used in perfumes, skin/sunburn relievers, and vaporizer solutions. The majority of

essential oils are easily absorbed through mucous membranes and skin. They can cause mucous membrane and gastrointestinal irritation, central nervous system depression, skin hypersensitivity and irritation.

Cationic detergent is the second main ingredient in liquid potpourris. The severe clinical signs of mucosal ulceration, or sores in the mouth, appear to be due to cationic detergents. These detergents are commonly used as fabric softeners, germicides, and sanitizers. Skin exposure to cationic detergents can result in redness of the skin, intense pain, and ulceration. Eye exposure could result in mild irritation to severe corneal injury, depending on the concentration of cationic detergent. Ingesting cationic detergents can lead to tissue damage, and inflammation of the mouth, tongue, pharynx, and esophagus. The **signs** of liquid potpourri ingestion are vomiting, increased salivation, depression, and trouble breathing.

If you like the smell of liquid potpourris, please use them safely. Keep all bottles in a safe, secure place, and keep burning simmer pots in a place your cat cannot reach. If you suspect your pet has ingested liquid potpourri, please contact your veterinarian.

TOXIC PLANTS

Every cat owner has heard that Poinsettias are poisonous to cats, what you may not realize is that so are a large number of other houseplants. They can be harmful or fatal depending on the quantity swallowed. You can prevent your cat from chewing on your houseplants by misting the leaves with water and then sprinkling them with cayenne pepper. You may also

want to consider planting a container of grass for your cat to chew on. If your cat is digging in your pots, go to your local craft store and buy a few pieces of plastic needlepoint canvas. Trim it to the shape of the pot and rest it on top of the soil, your cat will no longer be able to dig. You can also try covering the dirt with large rocks, and sometimes tin foil can work. Some of the **signs** that your pet may show are increased salivation, foaming at the mouth, vomiting, diarrhea, excessive thirst and urination, difficulty breathing, seizures, coma and even death. Here is a list of plants that are toxic:

- Aloe Vera
- Amaryllis
- Andromeda Japonica
- Arrowhead Vine
- Asian Lily (Liliaceae)
- Asparagus Fern
- Australian Nut
- Autumn Crocus
- Avocado
- Azalea
- Bird of Paradise
- American Bittersweet
- European Bittersweet
- Boston Ivy
- Branching Ivy
- Buckeye
- Buddist Pine
- Caladium
- Calla Lily
- Castor Bean
- Ceriman
- Charming Diefenbachia
- Chinaberry Tree
- Chinese Evergreen
- Christmas Rose
- Chrysanthemum
- Clematis
- Cordatum
- Corn/Cornstalk Plant
- Creeping Charlie
- Creeping Fig
- Crown of Thorns
- Cutleaf Philodendron
- Cycads
- Cyclamen
- Daffodil
- Day Lily
- Devil's Ivy
- Dieffenbachia
- Dumb Cane
- Deadly Nightshade
- Easter Lily
- Elephant Ears
- Emerald Feather
- Emerald Fern
- English Holly
- English and Glacier Ivy
- Fiddle-Leaf Philodendron
- Geranium

- Flamingo Plant
- Florida Beauty
- Foxglove
- Fruit Salad Plant
- Heartleaf Philodendron
- Heavenly Bamboo
- Holly
- Horsehead Philodendron
- Hurricane Plant
- Hyacinth
- Hydrangea
- Macadamia Nut
- Madagascar Dragon Tree
- Marble Queen
- Marijuana
- Mexican Breadfruit
- Mistletoe "American"
- Morning Glory
- Mother-in-Law
- Panda
- Peace Lily
- Philodendron Pertusum
- Plumosa Fern
- Precatory Bean
- Poinsettia
- Pothos
- Pot Mum
- Saddle Leaf Philodendron
- Sago Palm
- Satin Pothos
- Schefflera
- Spider Mum
- Spotted Dumb Cane
- Sprengeri Fern
- Stargazer Lily
- Striped Dracaena
- Sweetheart Ivy
- Swiss Cheese Plant
- Taro Vine
- Glacier Ivy
- Gladiolas
- Glory Lily
- Golden Pothos
- Iris
- Japanese Show Lily
- Japanese Yew (aka Yew)
- Jerusalem Cherry
- Kalanchoe
- Lace Fern
- Lily of the Valley
- Narcissus
- Needlepoint Ivy
- Nephthytis
- Nightshade
- Oleander
- Onion
- Orange Day Lily
- Queensland Nut
- Red Emerald
- Red Lily
- Red-Margined Dracaena
- Red Princess
- Ribbon Plant
- Rubrum Lily
- Tiger Lily
- Tomato Plant
- Tree Philodendron
- Tropic Snow Dumbcane
- Tulip
- Variable Dieffenbachia
- Variegated Philodendron
- Warneckei Dracaena
- Wood Lilly
- Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow
- Yucca

This list contains plants that have been reported as having systemic effects on animals and/or intense effects on the gastrointestinal tract. This list is not meant to be all-inclusive, but rather a compilation of the most frequently encountered plants. For more information you can visit the ASPCA Poison Control Center at <http://www.apcc.aspca.org>.