

Poison: The 10 Top In Homes

The home can be a serious source of poisons for our pets. In 2009, the ASPCA's Animal Poison Control Center (APCC) handled more than 140,000 cases of pets exposed to toxic substances, many of which included everyday household products. Below is the list of the top 10 household pet poisons that affected pet dogs and cats.

Human Medications:

For several years, human medications have been number one on the ASPCA's list of common hazards. Last year, the ASPCA managed 45,816 calls involving prescription and over-the-counter drugs such as painkillers, cold medications, antidepressants and dietary supplements

Insecticides:

One of the most common incidents involved the misuse of flea and tick products—such as applying the wrong topical treatment to the wrong species. Thus, it's always important to talk to your pet's veterinarian before beginning any flea and tick control program.

Human Food:

People food like grapes, raisins, avocado and products containing xylitol, like gum, can seriously disable animals. One of the worst offenders—chocolate—contains large amounts of methylxanthines, which, if ingested in significant amounts, can cause vomiting, diarrhea, panting, excessive thirst, urination, hyperactivity, and in severe cases, abnormal heart rhythm, tremors and seizures.

Plants;

Varieties such as azalea, rhododendron, sago palm, lilies, kalanchoe and schefflera are often found in homes and can be harmful to pets. Lilies are especially toxic to cats, and can cause life-threatening kidney failure even in small amounts.

Veterinary Products:

Even though veterinary medications are intended for pets, they're often misapplied or improperly dispensed by well-meaning pet owners. In 2009, the ASPCA managed thousands of cases involving animal-related preparations such as non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, heartworm preventatives, de-wormers, antibiotics, vaccines and nutritional supplements.

Rat and Mouse Poisons:

Many baits used to attract rodents contain inactive ingredients that are attractive to pets as well. Depending on the type of rodenticide, ingestions can lead to potentially life-threatening problems for pets including bleeding, seizures or kidney damage.

Household Cleaners:

Household cleaning supplies can be toxic to adults and children, but few take precautions to protect their pets from common agents such as bleaches, detergents and disinfectants. These products, when inhaled by our pets can cause serious gastrointestinal distress and irritation to the respiratory tract.

Heavy Metals:

Heavy metals such as lead, zinc and mercury accounted for 3,304 cases of pet poisonings in 2009. Lead is especially pernicious, and pets are exposed to it through many sources, including consumer products, paint chips, linoleum, and lead dust produced when surfaces in older homes are scraped or sanded

Garden Products:

Certain types of fertilizer and garden products can cause problems for outdoor cats and dogs. Last year, the ASPCA fielded many calls related to fertilizer exposure, which can cause severe gastric upset and possibly gastrointestinal obstruction.

Chemical Hazards:

A category on the rise, chemical hazards—found in ethylene glycol antifreeze, paint thinner, drain cleaners and pool/spa chemicals—form a substantial danger to pets. Substances in this group can cause gastrointestinal upset, depression, respiratory difficulties and chemical burns.

Prevention is the key to avoiding accidental exposure, but if you suspect your pet has ingested something toxic, please contact your veterinarian or the Animal Poison Control Center's 24-hour hotline at (888) 426-4435.