

MANAGING POISONED PETS

Many substances can be toxic to animals via dermal (skin), ingested, or inhaled exposure. With the large number of toxic substances found in households today comes a wide variety of confusing and overlapping clinical signs of poisoning. Because owners usually do not observe their pets contact with or ingestion of a toxin, medical attention is usually not sought until clinical signs appear. Clinical signs may be acute or may not develop for hours or days following exposure, although in the latter, owners may think the onset of signs in acute.

Management of animals with suspected toxicosis relies on efficient and effective emergency treatment, which usually begins before a diagnosis is confirmed. Owners who know or suspect that their pets were exposed to a toxin should bring the product's package to the veterinary hospital.

Seven steps for general management of poisoned pets are: 1) Emergency management and stabilization. 2) Clinical evaluation 3) Elimination of the poison. 4) Antidote administration 5) Elimination of the absorbed poison 6) Supportive therapy and observation and 7) Client education.

Some common household toxins and their clinical signs include:

Rat Baits: Bromethalin - Seizures Strychnine - Seizures
Anticoagulant rat baits - bloody stools, bloody nose, hematomas.

Insecticides: Cholinesterase inhibitors such as organophosphates and carbanates - salivation, lacrimation (active tear ducts), urination and defecation. Pyrethrins - Hypersalivation, exciteability and vomiting.

Methylxanthines (Chocolate, coffee, tea, caffeine, aminophylline (a

bronchodilator) - vomiting hyperactivity, tachycardia (increased heart rate), cardiac arrhythmias.

Aspirin or Ibuprofen - Vomiting and abdominal pain.

Acetaminophen: Cats - Anorexia, salivation, vomiting, progression to depression and methemoglobinemia (methemoglobin in the blood).

Dogs - Depression, anorexia, vomiting, progressive abdominal pain.

Some questions you should be able to answer upon taking your pet to the vet: 1) When did you first become aware of a change in your pet? 2) What signs did you notice? 3) Have the signs changed since you first detected them? 4) Have you given your pet any medication? 5) What medications do you keep in your home? 6) Does your pet have free outdoor access? 7) Are potential sources of pesticides accessible to your pet? 8) Do you suspect a poison or toxin? 9) If so, do you have any idea what your pet could have come in contact with?

If you as a pet owner have any concerns regarding something your pet consumed or came in contact with, don't hesitate in contacting your veterinarian. It is always better to be safe than sorry.