

Common Poisons and Hazards



Chocolate

Chocolate contains theobromine, a chemical similar to caffeine, which can cause toxic effects in cats and dogs. The amount of theobromine in chocolate varies depending on the quality and type of chocolate. Even a relatively small amount of dark chocolate (which has a high concentration of theobromine) can cause agitation, hyperexcitability, tremors, convulsions and heart disturbances.

NSAIDs (Non Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs)

Examples include ibuprofen. Ibuprofen is particularly toxic to dogs and can cause vomiting, diarrhoea, gastric ulceration and kidney failure

Anticoagulant Rodenticides

These products are used to help to control rodent infestations. Ingestion can cause bruising and bleeding but these effects may not be seen until several days later. It is important to note that not all rodenticides are anticoagulant, and therefore it is always important to determine which type an animal has ingested.

Paracetamol

A very common pain killer that is freely available from pharmacies, supermarkets and newsagents. It is found in many cold and flu products. Some animals, particularly cats, are very sensitive to paracetamol and even a very small quantity can be extremely dangerous.

Permethrin

Permethrin is used as an insecticide and can be found in many flea treatments available for dogs, with some flea 'spot-on' treatments (Bob Martins) containing very concentrated solutions of this chemical. However, cats are very sensitive to permethrin and even a correct dose for a small dog can be fatal.

Metaldehyde

Found in many slug and snail bait pellets used around the garden, it usually resembles blue/green pellets. These pellets are often eaten by inquisitive dogs and can cause rapid onset convulsions which can last many hours. Metaldehyde poisoning often results in hospitalisation for several days.

Lilies

These are very poisonous to cats and can cause kidney failure. Even a small amount of exposure to the pollen can be potentially very dangerous.

Grapes, Raisins, Sultanas and Currants

These can cause kidney failure in dogs, and potentially other animals too. Some dogs have eaten large amounts and developed no effects, while others have gone into kidney failure after ingesting a small number of raisins or grapes. Even ingestion of cooked fruits in fruit cake (Christmas cake) or Christmas pudding can cause kidney failure.

Adder

The European Adder is the only venomous snake native to the UK. Adder bites are generally seasonal, the majority occurring in the spring and summer months. Adder bites can be extremely dangerous, particularly if an animal has been bitten on the face. Bites may result in severe swelling which is generally seen within a few minutes to a few hours. There may also be pain, distress and sometimes bleeding. Other complications occur occasionally.

Benzalkonium Chloride

This is a type of detergent found in many household products including disinfectants, antiseptics and some patio cleaners. Cats can develop drooling, fever and tongue and mouth ulceration after licking treated surfaces. Signs typically develop hours after exposure.

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Toad Toxicity

Toads are most active around dawn and dusk and most toad related incidents occur in the evening when cats lick them. The signs of poisoning appear rapidly, and you can see drooling, frothing, foaming, pain around the mouth, vomiting, wobbliness, seizures and collapse in severe cases.

Anti-Freeze (Ethylene Glycol)

It smells and tastes sweet and cats will often drink it from puddles/spills on the floor, or lick it off their paws if they walk through it. The toxic dose is very small and even a few drops of ethylene glycol in a puddle will be enough to cause serious kidney damage and be fatal. Signs will develop within a few hours of ingestion but are mild, including vomiting, drooling and incoordination.

Xylitol

Xylitol is extremely harmful to dogs. This is a sweetener used in a lot of sugar-free foods, especially chewing gum and sweets.

Onions and garlic

Onions and garlic have chemicals called organosulphoxides within them, which can lead to anaemia and other health conditions if enough is eaten and absorbed over a number of days. Be particularly careful with gravies which contain onion powder.

Human Medications

All human medications can potentially be harmful to your pet and should be kept out of the animals reach, within a cupboard.

Cooked Bones

Cooked bones can be particularly dangerous to animals as they can splinter/shatter and cause the animal to choke, or cause injury to the stomach or intestines.