

Beware of Antifreeze

Every winter, hundreds of cats are treated for ethylene glycol toxicity.

By Ruth Macpete, DVM

Although ethylene glycol is used primarily in antifreeze, it also can be found in cosmetics, paints and snow globe toys. Cats, other animals and children are attracted to ethylene glycol because of its sweet taste.

Antifreeze usually is found in sheds and garages but sometimes can leak under cars, where cats often hide. Ethylene glycol causes acute kidney failure and death. It is highly toxic and only a small amount needs to be ingested to be fatal. Less than half a tablespoon can be lethal to a 10-pound cat. Cats typically develop symptoms of ethylene glycol toxicity within 30 minutes, and their kidneys can stop functioning within six hours after ingestion.

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