

Avoid Pet Poisonings

In honor of National Poison Prevention Week, find out what common household items can be dangerous to your pet.

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National Poison Prevention Week is March 18 - 24, and as it approaches, the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals' (ASPCA) Animal Poison Control Center cautions pet owners to be mindful of exposing their pets to substances and other items that might be harmful to them.

"Every year thousands of animals are hurt and sometimes seriously injured by poisonous items — many as seemingly innocent as a plant," said Steven Hansen, veterinary toxicologist and senior vice president of the ASPCA's Midwest Office in Urbana, Ill., which also houses the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center.

To help pet owners identify potentially dangerous objects, the ASPCA has compiled the following tips:

Be aware of the plants you have in your home and yard. Some plants such as the Sago palm, oleander, lily and rhododendron can be toxic to pets if ingested.

Do not allow pets to have access to the areas in which cleaning agents are being used or stored. Cleaning agents have a variety of properties; some might cause only mild stomach upset, but others can cause severe burns of the tongue, mouth and stomach.

Be careful when using rat and mouse baits.

Read the label first. Always read the label before using flea products on or around your pets. For example, some flea products for dogs can be deadly if given to cats.

Keep all prescription and over-the-counter drugs out of your pets' reach, preferably in closed cabinets. Pain killers, cold medicines, anti-cancer drugs, antidepressants, vitamins and diet pills are all examples of human medications that can be lethal to animals, even in small doses.

Be aware of foods that are inappropriate for pets. Some potentially harmful foods include: onions, onion powder, chocolate, chewing gum, raisins and grapes, alcoholic beverages, yeast dough, avocados, coffee, tea, salt, macadamia nuts, hops (used in home beer brewing), tomato leaves and stems, rhubarb leaves and moldy or spoiled foods.

Automotive products such as gasoline, oil and antifreeze should be stored in areas that are inaccessible to your pets. As little as one teaspoon of antifreeze can be deadly to a cat, according to pet health experts.

Make sure your pets do not go on lawns or in gardens treated with fertilizers, herbicides or insecticides until they have dried completely.

Click here for more information on substances in the home that are potentially dangerous to animals. To reach the ASPCA's Animal Poison Control Center, call (888) 426-4435.