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Putting your Pets First

BRIDGE

VETERINARY PRACTICE LTD
WROXHAM

NEWS



WINTER 2019

Common poisons

The winter season is when we have more enquiries about the consumption of items that can be harmful to our pets. We have compiled a list of some of the most common offenders:



1. Chocolate



Chocolate contains a substance called theobromine which can cause toxic effects in cats and dogs. The amount varies depending on the quality and type of chocolate. As a general rule, the darker the chocolate, the more it contains. Even a relatively small amount of dark chocolate can rapidly cause major illness and even death. Don't forget cocoa powder either - cakes and treats made with it can also contain high amounts. If you think your cat or dog may have ingested any chocolate don't delay and give us a call.

2. NSAIDs (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs) and painkillers

Examples include ibuprofen and naproxen. NSAIDs are commonly available "over-the-counter" for pain management and in cold and flu products. Ibuprofen is particularly toxic to cats and dogs, causing vomiting, diarrhoea, gastric ulceration and kidney failure. Some medications for dogs can also be very toxic to cats. Paracetamol is a very common pain killer. Some animals, particularly cats, are very sensitive to paracetamol and even a very small quantity can be extremely dangerous.

3. Grapes, raisins, currants and sultanas

These can cause kidney failure in dogs,

and potentially other animals too.

The toxic mechanism is not understood and the quantity that can cause problems seems to be very variable. Some dogs have eaten large amounts and developed no effects, while others have gone into kidney failure after ingesting just one or two raisins or grapes. Even ingestion of cooked fruits in fruit cake (e.g. Christmas cake, mince pies) or Christmas pudding can cause kidney failure.



4. Various plants and flowers

Lilies - These are very poisonous to cats and can cause kidney failure. It appears that all parts of the plant are poisonous to cats, including the pollen can be potentially very dangerous.

Poinsettia (*Euphorbia pulcherrima*), Holly (*Ilex* species), Mistletoe (*Viscum album*) and Ivy (*Hedera* species) are all generally considered of low toxicity, possibly causing mild gastrointestinal upsets whilst, Ivy can sometimes cause skin irritation. Christmas trees are also of low risk; however, pine needles can be a mechanical irritant, whilst ingesting a lot of them has been known to cause an intestinal blockage!

5. 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 within a few hours of exposure.

6. Rat and Mouse Bait

Are usually very toxic to all pets. Not all work in the same way therefore it is always important to determine which type an animal has ingested and give us a call straight away for advice.



7. Anti-freeze

Even the smallest amount of antifreeze (containing Ethylene Glycol) can cause kidney failure and death when ingested.

Signs of antifreeze poisoning include vomiting, a sleepy or depressed demeanour, a drunk-like and uncoordinated

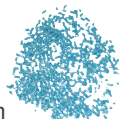
state, leading to seizures and difficulty breathing. Signs can begin to show as soon as 30 minutes post-ingestion, with kidney failure following. We advise that you contact us immediately if you suspect poisoning as the condition can progress rapidly.

8. House and garden insecticides

Permethrin is used as an insecticide and can be found in many household and garden sprays. Cats are very sensitive to permethrin, please make sure if you are using these products that your cat is kept away from the area you are treating.

9. Snail and Slug bait

Metaldehyde is the active ingredient in these baits, it usually resembles blue or green pellets. These pellets are often eaten by inquisitive dogs and cats which can cause rapid-onset convulsions which can last many hours. Metaldehyde poisoning often results in hospitalisation for several days and sometimes death.



10. Various other foods

Onions (and garlic, leeks, shallots and chives) including sage and onion stuffing - can all cause anaemia and bloody urine in dogs and cats.

Alcohol - can cause similar problems to us, but pets are more sensitive so can result in severe neurological damage and organ failure rapidly.

Macadamia nuts can cause vomiting, ataxia or weakness, fever, muscle tremors and depression - but only in dogs.

Leftovers, particularly mouldy foodstuffs often contain tremorgenic mycotoxins - chemicals produced by moulds - which cause neurological problems including violent tremors.

If you suspect that your pet has ingested any of these items please call us as soon as possible.

Finally, something everyone thinks is toxic but actually isn't! Silica gel is a desiccant, usually found in sachets within packaging for leather goods and electronics. It may be labelled DO NOT EAT or even have a 'skull and crossbones' on the sachet. It is not toxic, just inedible, but these warnings can cause alarm. No treatment is required after ingestion of silica gel.

Consultations by Appointment

Mon, Tue & Fri: 8am to 8pm
(phones open until 6:30pm)

Wed & Thur: 8am to 6:30pm

Saturday: 8.30am-1.00pm

Tel: 01603 783920

24 Hour Emergency Service

After Hours call: 01603 867330

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Winter survival guide!

Winter is fast approaching. The weather is getting wetter and colder and your pet may decide to spend more time inside by the fire than running around outside! Here are some things to look out for to keep them in the best of health:

Sore joints: Pets with joint problems often start to struggle in the colder weather. Look out for hanging back on walks, stiffness in the mornings or them being reluctant to go out. Many pets will benefit from anti-inflammatory medication and also joint supplements. Arthritic pets often struggle with long walks, so little and often is the key.

Can you pinch an inch? With many pets spending more time indoors during the winter months – they are getting less exercise and need correspondingly less food. Keep an eye out for any weight gain since excess weight can cause a range of health problems including heart disease, diabetes and can also significantly worsen arthritis.

On snowy days remember to check your pet's paws after walks and give them a good wipe down. Snow balls up painfully between toes, especially on fluffy feet and grit and salt can be very caustic.

Festive alert: During the festive season, make sure all your decorations and wires are out of reach of pets since they make very tempting toys! Hide any edible presents (especially chocolate) until the very last minute and resist the temptation to share your seasonal snacks, they will only cause upset tummies. Any cake or pies containing grapes, nuts or raisins must also be avoided! If your pet swallows anything unusual please contact us at once!

Outdoor pets: Also don't forget about smaller pets who live outdoors. Make sure rabbits and guinea pigs have well insulated hutches, plenty of bedding to snuggle down in and check their water twice daily to ensure it hasn't frozen. If possible move their hutch in to a shed, garage or even indoors when cold weather arrives.

For further information on any of the topics mentioned in this article, please speak to a member of our team.



Should I have my pet neutered?



One of the many decisions facing pet owners is that of neutering. The good news is that apart from preventing unwanted pregnancies, there are several other benefits to having pets neutered as outlined below. Neutered pets are likely to live longer, healthier lives thanks to surgical procedures which are safe, quick and relatively painless.

Dogs: **Un-neutered female dogs** typically come into season twice a year. Their vulva will become prominent, they will be more attractive to male dogs and can have light or heavy bleeding for up to three weeks. In this time they need to be walked away from other dogs and kept on the lead. Both sexes are prone to roam in an effort to mate, with the associated risks of becoming permanently lost or injured whilst roaming. In addition to avoiding further seasons, spaying your female pet will reduce her chances of mammary cancer later in life and prevents a life threatening condition called a pyometra. This causes a pus filled uterus which sometimes needs emergency surgery.

Un-neutered male dogs may be less easy to recall when off the lead, urine mark their territory, or show excessive sexual behaviours. Castrating them reduces the risk of some prostatic disease later in life and removes the risk of testicular cancer.



Cats can be neutered at an early age, usually before sexual maturity. Your **female cat** typically comes into season every three weeks making pregnancy a strong possibility. When she is in season (or on heat) she will become vocal and want to go outside. This can happen as early as six months of age! **Male cats** who are not castrated are more likely to roam, looking for females, increasing their risk of being in car accidents and cat fights. Some cats can spread Feline Leukemia from bites which can be life threatening. Male cats are also more likely to spray strong smelling urine inside the house, marking their territory.

We do not advise neutering **ferrets** as it is proven to often result in severe hormonal disease later in life in both sexes. However, Jills (female) can have problems if they are not mated - hence we advise either using a hormonal implant to suppress their seasons or having a vasectomised male with which they can mate without producing offspring, bringing them out of the season and preventing the issue. Vasectomising ferrets is a simple procedure carried out under general anaesthetic.

The good news is that there are a range of benefits to neutering your pets! Please contact us if you would like any further information or to get your pet booked in for an operation!



Rabbits: Both sexes of rabbits benefit hugely from being neutered. Rabbits are sociable animals and neutering is very important to allow them to live harmoniously in pairs. The best bonded pairs are typically spayed females and castrated males. Neutered rabbits are easier to handle and also less prone to fighting.

Brrr! In Winter, the fleas don't flee!



Now the weather is colder, it is easy to assume that you don't need to protect your pets against parasites, especially fleas. However, it is actually more important than ever!

In summer, fleas can happily survive outside, especially on wildlife but in the winter it isn't so easy for them, unless they move somewhere that is warm, cosy and has lots of bodies to keep them fed! Remind you of anywhere?! Yes, it is your home!

Our centrally heated homes, with plenty of soft furnishings to hide in and pets to feed off, are an ideal winter breeding ground for these little biters, so we can't take our eyes off the ball!

We have lots of products to help kill fleas and larvae. Make sure you are applying them correctly, at the right interval – as you do in the summer and treating all pets in the household. If any family members have small bites or itches on their legs you may need to use a flea control spray in the house. Don't forget to vacuum and wash any fabrics such as bedding on a high heat setting. Have a chat to our team about how to ensure you and your pets don't end up with a winter flea infestation!