



Winter 2010 Newsletter #34

Welcome to the Veterinary Newsletter, brought to you by the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center.

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Featured Staff of the Toxicology Team

Joseph Gillen - Veterinary Assistant

I grew up in Lincoln, IL and my dad is a small animal veterinarian there. I worked at his clinic off and on from junior high through high school. I graduated from the University of Illinois in 2008 with a major in integrative biology and worked for Health Alliance in the customer service department for 1.5 years before coming to the ASPCA-APCC. I currently live in Champaign with my wife, Jen, our beagle mix, Yorick, and our 3 cats, Cosmo, Lilah, and Bailey.

Samantha Wright - Veterinary Assistant

I have experience in public services as I worked at the Humane Society before this. I worked on the adoption staff for about a year and a half then moved to the surgery suite and assisted the veterinarian. Working with the University of Illinois, I have designed educational websites for children teaching them about basic animal issues. During college, I

worked with mentally and physically disabled children and learned to count my blessings everyday from them.

I was born in Southern California and moved to Northern Illinois with my family over ten years ago. I graduated from U of I with a Bachelor's of Science in Animal Science in 2008. I now live in Homer with my husband and four "kids". I have 2 dogs and 2 cats; all of them have a sad story. My husband and I love to write trivia questions for different organizations in the area. I live for baseball and can be found watching a game at anytime during the season.

Practice Tips

Ever need the weight of a raisin? You can search for many facts on the USDA National Nutrient Database for Standard Reference. Just go to <http://www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/foodcomp/search/>

What's New on the APCC Website?

Need a new app for your iPhone? Check out our Poisonous plant "Pet Safe" app on iTunes! It is compatible with the iPhone and the iPod touch and includes toxic plant information. This is a great tool to have with you when you're out shopping. Check it out at: <http://www.asPCA.org/blog/poisonous-plant-pet-safe.html>

Another great help for your clients is the ability to order a Free Pet Safety Pack containing an emergency pet rescue window decal to alert rescue personnel to the presence of pets in the home as well as an ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center Magnet — a great way to keep the APCC's toll-free emergency number handy at all times! [The order form is available here.](#)

Your clients love their pets and often think of them as surrogate children. But cats and dogs (and birds and turtles) are not little people and often pet owners are not aware of some of the hazards that 'people food' may pose to pets. Steer them to our website on People Foods to Avoid Feeding Your Pets to help educate them on what they should not be sharing with their four legged (or winged) family members.

The ASPCA is proud to introduce our free ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center Banner, which will allow direct access from your website to ours! With the click of a mouse, your clients have access to information about the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center, in addition to endless amounts of information regarding potentially harmful substances. We look forward to working with you to improve the lives of animals. For access to the free link, [click here](#). For additional information, please feel free to contact the ASPCA at 888.426.4911.

Did you know?

That you can access a large source of veterinary and medical literature online? Just go to **PubMed** at <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/entrez/query.fcgi> and type in you search parameters. You can view abstracts, order reprints, and in some cases view entire documents online.

And did you know?

Ever have trouble identifying a plant? There are various websites that provide lists of toxic and non-toxic plants, including the genus species name and the common name, as well as

photos of these plants. One is ASPCA website, <http://www.asPCA.org/pet-care/poison-control/plants/> and another is <http://plants.usda.gov>.

Winter Hazards for Pets



Low Toxicity: (may cause gastrointestinal upset, but unlikely to cause serious problems unless very large amounts are ingested)

- Christmas tree preservatives (stale water in tree stand can harbor bacteria)
- Poinsettias
- Holly
- Canned "snow"

Moderate toxicity: (may cause significant signs beyond mild gastrointestinal upset)

- Mistletoe (species dependent)
- Ice melting products
- Liquid potpourri
- Batteries

High toxicity: (potential for very serious or life-threatening signs)

- Antifreeze/coolants
- Chocolate
- Rising bread dough (yeast produce ethanol; dough is expanding foreign body concern)
- Human medications (cold and flu medications, decongestants)
- Alcoholic beverages
- Homemade "play-dough" (high sodium content)
- Xylitol in holiday baked goods

Useful Websites

Information for you and your technical staff can be found on our website courtesy of *Veterinary Technician*:

["Tis the Season to Be Informed: Toxic Potential of Holiday Plants"](#) by Dana Farbman, CVT, and ["Poisons and Other Holiday Hazards"](#) by Mindy Bough, CVT.

Yuletide traditions can be hazardous to your pet's health. The ASPCA's Dr. Steven Hansen, a board-certified toxicologist, offers helpful tips for owners to keep pets safe and healthy this holiday season.

http://www.asPCA.org/site/PageServer?pagename=pro_apcc&JServSessionIdr012=j5zgbd7z32.app23b

And, of course, listings of nontoxic and toxic plants may be [found on our web page](#).

Toxicant Update – Ice Melts

Now that the colder months are upon us, snow and ice are sure to follow. Soon folks will be using a variety of ice melt products to try and keep sidewalks and driveways safe. House pets can accidentally be exposed to these types of products and experience potentially serious problems because of that exposure.

There are several common ingredients in most commercially available ice melt products, including sodium chloride, potassium chloride, magnesium chloride, calcium salts and urea.

Sodium Chloride: Sodium toxicosis is possible after large ingestions of ice melts, salt, or rock salt. A dose of 4g/kg of sodium chloride can be lethal in dogs. Ingestion can cause gastrointestinal signs, PU/PD, hypernatremia leading to tremors, seizures, tachycardia and metabolic acidosis. Treatment of acute sodium chloride toxicosis primarily involves IV fluids and managing signs. The fluid of choice is either half strength saline + 2.5% dextrose, or 5% dextrose in water. Furosemide may help prevent pulmonary edema during fluid therapy. For hypernatremia occurring over days to weeks, it is important to correct sodium slowly over a period of 48 to 72 hours in order to avoid cerebral edema. The sodium should not be lowered at a rate of more than 0.7 mEq/L/hr. Sodium bicarbonate should be used cautiously when treating acidosis as not to exacerbate hypernatremia.

Potassium Chloride: Ingestion of this ingredient can cause severe irritation to the GI tract, including hemorrhage. Hyperkalemia can also occur, mainly in patients with renal insufficiency. Signs associated with hyperkalemia are vomiting/diarrhea, weakness, hypotension, and abnormal cardiac conduction. Treatment usually begins with dilution, as emesis is controversial. Fluids (LRS or saline) and furosemide or hydrochlorothiazide are used to treat the hyperkalemia. Other recommended treatments include electrolyte, glucose and renal function monitoring.

Magnesium Chloride: Hypermagnesemia can occur after ice-melt ingestion. Hypermagnesemia can cause hypotension, hypophosphatemia, cardiac abnormalities (atrioventricular block, prolonged QT intervals, and bradycardia), weakness, and impaired neuromuscular transmission. Patients with renal insufficiency are more susceptible to developing hypermagnesemia. The LD 50 of magnesium chloride in rats is about 4,000 mg/kg. Dust from products containing magnesium may be irritating and can cause upset

stomach. Treatment of magnesium salt ingestion is symptomatic and supportive. Emesis may reduce the amount absorbed if induced within two hours of ingestion.

Calcium Carbonate and Calcium Magnesium Acetate: Acute ingestion of calcium salts is unlikely to increase serum calcium concentrations, because of the requirement of an acidic pH, parathyroid hormone, and vitamin D for absorption. The calcium carbonate and calcium magnesium acetate forms are irritants, and can cause gastritis, while the calcium chloride form is capable of causing severe irritation, including hemorrhage. Treatment is symptomatic and supportive including treatment for severe mucosal irritation with exposure to the calcium chloride form.

Urea: Monogastric animals are not susceptible to urea poisoning but may exhibit increased blood ammonia concentrations. Ruminants and large-bowel fermenters are susceptible because their intestinal microflora provides an ideal environment for the hydrolysis of urea, releasing carbon dioxide and ammonia. Ingestion of urea by dogs usually results in local irritation, and signs of hypersalivation, gastroenteritis, and abdominal pain. Less frequent signs include methemoglobinemia, weakness, and tremors. Managing urea ingestion in monogastric animals includes inducing emesis and monitoring electrolyte concentrations.

Top 10 Reasons Why Pet Owners Call the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center

1. Failure to keep medications in a secured area away from pets.
2. Confusing their pet's medication with their own medication or another pet's medication, or administering medications to animals without veterinary directions.
3. Allowing pets access to areas where herbicides and fertilizers have recently been applied and/or storing such products in areas that are accessible to pets.
4. Failures to store pesticides such as ant and roach traps, rat baits, or snail bait in secured areas, out of pets reach.
5. Lack of awareness of poisonous plants in their home or in their pet's environment (e.g. bouquets with lilies).
6. Improper or inappropriate use of flea and tick products on pets or in the home.
7. Failure to clean up automotive products such as antifreeze/coolant leaks or storing such containers in areas that are accessible to pets.
8. Pets getting into cleaning products or licking areas where cleaning products are in use or have been spilled.
9. Leaving out candies, including Easter baskets, Valentine's Day hearts, Halloween treat baskets, trays of brownies or fudge and candies wrapped as presents under the Christmas tree.
10. Dogs getting in to the garbage can and eating spoiled and rotten foods, coffee grounds and medications that the owner have thrown away.

Not a VLPP Member?

If you are not a member of the Veterinary Lifeline Partner Program and would like to join, please click [here](#) or call (888) 332-3651 to be prepared for any poison emergency.

Authors:

Linda Dolder, DVM, Consulting Veterinarian in Clinical Toxicology, APCC

Editor:

Tina Wismer, DVM, DABVT, DABT, Senior Director of Veterinary Outreach and Education

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