

Tip Of The Tail

Toxic Trouble

Most of the time, poisons and dangerous chemicals are clearly marked, making them easy to avoid. Unfortunately, many dangerous products in our homes go unrecognized because they are safe for humans. If nothing else, remember this: We make pets our family members, but we should treat them as permanent toddlers, pet-proofing our homes often.



Almost all of us are guilty of having harmful products around our animals unknowingly. Today, I found seven things in my own kitchen that could potentially hurt my pets.

- Cleaning products, whether in the bottle or on surfaces, can cause severe chemical burns in the mouth, stomach or intestines, and can cause mild to fatal vomiting and diarrhea.

- Alcohol should never be given to pets in any amount, as this can turn a party into a potentially fatal emergency.

- Caffeine and related chemicals found in coffee and chocolate can result in fatal cardiac abnormalities. Similarly, the artificial sugar, xylitol, which is found in gum and candy, can be deadly.

- Macadamia nuts, onions and even grapes and raisins are toxic to pets. Apple seeds, cherry pits, peach pits and plum pits contain small amounts of the toxin cyanide and should never be fed to your pet.

- Leftovers or table scraps, especially those high in fat, can

severely injure the pancreas of your animal, and can also lead to behavioral and training problems down the road.

As odd as it may be, many pets are drawn to the bathroom. There are bottles that rattle, lotions that smell good, and maybe even the singing in the shower brings them in. But the easy access to this room makes it potentially dangerous. Over-the-counter and prescription medications, even if safe for humans, can make your pet sick, or fatally harm them. Never give your pet a medication without consulting your veterinarian.

It is also important to remember cats are **not** dogs that meow. Some veterinary products are only safe for certain species and you should never give your cats and dogs each other's medications. For example, some flea and tick products are only safe for specific animals or animal breeds. Read the label and always follow your veterinarian's instructions. Along the same lines, do not adjust the dosage of any pet medication without first discussing it with your veterinarian. Giving too little of the proper medication can be just as dangerous as giving too much.

Moving to another part of the home, it doesn't take long to find hazardous material in the garage. This situation is very simple – keep pets out of the garage or storage shed unless everything is securely stored. Almost all automotive fluids are toxic, including gasoline, oil, brake fluid and antifreeze. Other items commonly found in these rooms include pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers, which are all toxic if ingested. Carefully read the label on each product to determine when it's safe for people and pets to re-enter treated areas, as many pesticides and bug or rodent baits contain sweet-smelling chemicals designed to attract pests, and inadvertently also attracts our pets.

Indoor and outdoor plants, along with certain types of weeds,

are another source of danger. Many very common plants can be harmful, including Easter lily, mistletoe and sago palm. Oleander, even just one or two leaves, is often fatal. If there is ever a question about the toxicity of a plant, ask your veterinarian. If you don't know what a plant is, take it to a local nursery for identification.

There are many other household items to keep out of your pets' reach. Pennies contain zinc and can slowly poison your pet if swallowed. Potpourri, mothballs, tobacco and batteries can be highly toxic, even in small amounts.

It would be difficult to discuss every toxic trouble your pets can get into, but taking an extra minute here or there to read labels and follow instructions can help you and your pet avoid harm or an emergency situation. Pay special attention to the common problems mentioned here and always use common sense. Anytime a potential poisoning has occurred, immediately call your veterinarian. Other helpful resources for you include:

- ASPCA Poison Control: 1-888-426-4435 (There is a per case charge)

- Florida Poison Control: 1-800-282-3141 (This is a free service for human exposure, but they also have a lot of animal information)

Established in 1981, Palm City Animal Clinic is dedicated to providing the best possible care for your pets. With focuses on compassionate care in surgery, physical therapy and rehabilitation, preventative medicine, extensive diagnostics and emergency service, Palm City Animal Clinic combines exceptional medical care with a caring philosophy for pets and their owners. For more information, call (772) 283-0920, visit www.palmcityanimalclinic.com or find us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/PalmCityAnimalClinic.