Poison Prevention Tips for Small Pets

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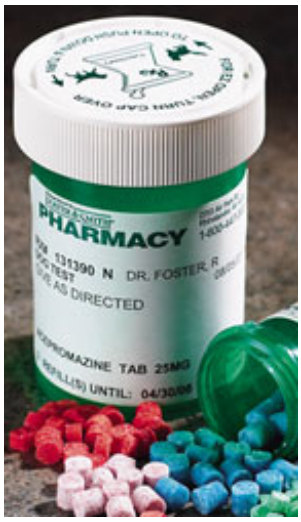

It is no secret that what most small pets lack in size, they make up for in curiosity. With a quick, sure-footed scamper around their cage and an eager twitch of the nose as they investigate something new, small pets are the detectives of the animal world. Some people say they are most fond of their small pet's inquisitive nature and how it, in turn, piques their own interest in the world around them. But it is easy to forget how dangerous our world can be when it is discovered by the exploratory instincts of our furry friends. Many common products are a potent mix of chemicals that are poisonous when ingested. Some are even lethal when they contact the skin. They are conveniently spread throughout and around our homes. This makes them easy targets for any instinctively curious pet or the inquisitive mind of a child.

As in years past, the third week of March has been set aside as Poison Prevention Week. This is a good time to review what potential poisons we may have in and around our homes, garages, and vehicles. Each toxin should be properly contained and safely out of reach of children and pets. When sorting and storing possible dangerous household items, keep the following guidelines in mind:

- To a pet, everything is new. Where we have centuries of science, trial and error, and libraries full of newspapers, magazines, and books warning us which products are lethal and which are safe, a pet does not. Plus, most small pets have spent their lives away from their parents; therefore, they lack the generational knowledge to which humans are privy.

- Just because your small pet is caged does not mean she is safe. In addition to unbridled curiosity, most small pets are expert escape artists. No habitat or cage is 100% secure - especially when all have access doors we can easily forget to secure. You can lessen the likelihood that your pet will escape by always making sure the door is shut securely and by using locks if your pet is an especially adept escapist.
- An escaped small pet is much more difficult to find than a dog or cat. Plus, small pets move fast and can get into the smallest of places. This gives them loads of time to discover and get into potentially poisonous items, all before you may have even noticed they have disappeared.
- Small pets are small sized. This means a small amount of ingested toxin can cause a large amount of sickness or, worse, the loss of a pet. Therefore,be very careful when handling any hazardous material, as a single drop of liquid or speck of powder is just as dangerous to your small pet as a large spill is to us.

When we discuss potential poisons to animals, many people forget that more than just household cleaners, pest control poisons, and plants may be toxic. When storing all potentially dangerous items, keep the following in mind:

- Medications, either for humans or pets, can be dangerous. Sure, these products are designed to help us and our animal friends overcome inflictions and/or diseases. But all medicines are unnatural to our, and our furry friends', bodies, whether because of the combination or concentration of ingredients. Furthermore, medications are especially dangerous because many are flavored to ease consumption - which makes them seem extra tasty to tiny, curious tongues.
- Store all vitamins, supplements, prescriptions, and over-the-counter medications inside a high cupboard with a safety latch. Small amounts of painkillers, cold medicines, antidepressants, vitamins, and diet pills can be lethal to animals. The same goes for any objects that are not native to your small pet's natural environment.
- Never give your pets medications unless directed to do so by a veterinarian. Many human medicines are toxic for pets. Also, do not try and diagnose any disease your small pet may have. Although informing yourself about various

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disease traits is smart pet husbandry, you should combine this knowledge together with the expertise of your veterinarian to determine any problems your pet may have. It will save you a lot of time, money, and heartache in the long run.

- Always read product labels and follow directions accordingly. Medications designed to prevent fleas, cure infections, etc. are designed to work over time, not overnight.

Dogs **Cats** **Birds** **Herps** **Ferrets** **Fish** **Small Pets**

If you suspect your small pet has ingested something poisonous, remain calm, but seek medical attention immediately.

In an emergency, pet owners can call the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center. The ASPCA has the nation's only animal poison control center staffed by twenty-five veterinarians, including five board-certified veterinary toxicologists and ten certified veterinary technicians. They are open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. They charge $65.00 per case. To contact the ASPCA, call 1-888-4ANI-HELP or 1-888-426-4435 (charge billed to caller's credit card).

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