Poison Prevention

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

As in years past, a week in March has been set aside as Poison Prevention Week. This is a good time to review what potential poisons we may have in our homes, garages, and outdoors, and make sure they are safely out of reach of children and pets.

The ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center in partnership with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) wants to educate pet owners and veterinarians across the Nation during National Poison Prevention Week (the third week in March) to Read the Label First! when using household cleaners, flea preparations and other products in the home and on their companion animal. This campaign is part of the Consumer Labeling Initiative (CLI), an ongoing voluntary partnership to improve label information and to help the public purchase, use and dispose of products safely and responsibly in and around their homes.

More manufacturers are voluntarily changing their labels to make them easier-to-read and understand. According to Dr. Steven Hansen, Senior Vice-President of the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center, "We receive a large number of calls related to inappropriate usage of products such as flea and tick preparations on pets. In many cases, problems would not have occurred if the pet owner had taken the time to carefully read and follow the label instructions and precautions."

Helpful tips for using flea and tick or other products safely in the home and on a pet:

- Never use insecticides on very young, pregnant, debilitated, or elderly animals without consulting your veterinarian.
- Observe your pet closely after using flea products. If your pet exhibits unusual behavior, or becomes depressed, weak or uncoordinated you should seek veterinary advice immediately.
- When using a fogger or spray in your home, make sure to remove all pets from the house for the time period specified on the container. Food and water bowls should be removed from the area. Allow time for the product to dry completely before returning your animals to your home. Open windows or use fans to "air out" the household before returning your pets to the treated area. Strong fumes can be irritating to your animal's eyes and upper respiratory system.
- Birds are more sensitive to fumes and usually require more time than other pets before their return to the treated home. Contact your veterinary health professional for advice on product usage around your birds.
- Be sure to keep products in their original containers to avoid leakage, accidental mix-ups, and loss of important label information should an accidental exposure occur.
- Never keep pesticide, cleaning or other household products near pet food or water bowls, and store products such as these in a secure cabinet above countertop level out of your pet's reach.
- Once again, ALWAYS "Read the Label First!" This could save the life of your pet!

For more pet poison safety tips and to download the Read the Label First! brochure, visit www.apcc.aspca.org.

For more information on potential poisons, click on the species listed. Become familiar with what to do if you suspect your pet has become poisoned, as described below.

Dogs Cats Birds Herps Ferrets Fish Small Pets

If you suspect that your pet has ingested something poisonous, seek medical attention immediately.

In an emergency, pet owners can call the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center, the nation's only animal poison control center staffed by twenty-five veterinarians including five board-certified veterinary toxicologists and ten certified veterinary technicians. Located in Urbana, Illinois, the specially trained staff provides assistance to pet owners and specific diagnostic and treatment recommendation to veterinarians pertaining to toxic chemicals and dangerous plants, products or substances 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. In 2001, the Center handled over 65,000 cases. The Center also provides extensive veterinary toxicology expert consulting on a wide array of subjects including legal cases, formulation issues, product liability, and regulatory reporting. To reach The ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center call:

- 1-888-4ANI-HELP or 1-888-426-4435 ($65.00 per case). The charge is billed to caller's credit card only.

Follow-up calls can be made for no additional charge by dialing 1-888-299-2973. There is no charge when the call involves a product covered by the Animal Product Safety Service.

Before you call the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center:

- If you suspect that your pet has been exposed to a poison, it is important not to panic. While rapid response is

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important, panicking generally interferes with the process of helping your animal.

- Take 30 to 60 seconds to safely collect and have at hand the material involved. This may be of great benefit to the Center professionals as they determine exactly what poison or poisons are involved. In the event that you need to take your animal to your local veterinarian, be sure to take with you any product container. Also bring any material your pet may have vomited or chewed, collected in a zip-lock bag.
- If your animal is seizuring, losing consciousness, unconscious, or having difficulty breathing, you should contact your veterinarian immediately. Most veterinarians are familiar with the consulting services of the Center. Depending on your particular situation, your local veterinarian may want to contact the Center personally while you bring your pet to the animal hospital.

When you call the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center, be ready to provide:

- Your name, address, and telephone number.
- Information concerning the exposure (the amount of agent, the time since exposure, etc.). For various reasons, it is important to know exactly what poison the animal was exposed to. [If the agent is part of the Animal Product Safety Service, the consultation is at no cost to the caller.]
- The species, breed, age, sex, weight, and number of animals involved.
- The agent your animal(s) has been exposed to, if known.
- The problems your animal(s) is experiencing.
- If you are unable to access the 900 number, call your telephone company for assistance or use the 888 number. When the 888 number is used, your credit card number will likely be required in addition to the above information

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