

POISON INFORMATION

[ASPCA Poison Control Center Homepage](#) National Animal Poison Control Center - In a life and death situation when every minute counts for an animal, you can call the ASPCA National Animal Poison Control Center for 24-hour emergency information at: **888-426-4435 888-4ANI-HELP**.

The National Pesticide Telecommunications Network 800.858.7378: Free nonemergency information about pesticides concerning both animals and people. Available 6:30-4:30 (Pacific time)

Antifreeze When temperatures drop across the country, the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center (APCC) urges pet owners to step up precautions against dangers your pets may face outdoors. Antifreeze, for example, can be fatal to dogs and cats if ingested--even in very tiny doses. Unfortunately, because of its sweet taste, animals are attracted to this commonly used automotive chemical, so be sure to thoroughly clean up any spills from your vehicle. You may also want to consider switching to a propylene glycol-based antifreeze, which is significantly less toxic than conventional ethylene glycol antifreeze. This will provide an added margin of safety for pets and wildlife, but remember--no antifreeze is absolutely safe.

If you suspect that your pet has ingested antifreeze--or any poisonous substance--call your veterinarian or the APCC's emergency hotline at 1-888-4-ANI-HELP for round-the-clock telephone assistance. For more information on poison prevention, visit <http://www.napcc.asPCA.org>.



Christmas Holiday Hazards

For many of us, 'tis the season to decorate our homes with live Christmas trees and holiday greenery. But did you know that some of these yuletide traditions can be hazardous to your pet's health?

- Lovely lilies are commonly used in holiday floral arrangements, but many varieties, including tiger, Asian, Japanese Show, Stargazer and the Casa Blanca, can cause kidney failure in cats.
- Bag the boughs of holly and live mistletoe. Yes, they add a nice touch to your holiday decor, but holly can cause vomiting, nausea, diarrhea and lethargy if ingested by your pet. And should he eat mistletoe, he could suffer gastrointestinal upset and cardiovascular problems. Opt for just-as-pretty artificial plants made from silk or plastic instead.

- If your dog or cat ingests pine tree needles, she can suffer an upset stomach and oral pain.
- Although the potential toxicity of poinsettias is generally overrated, these showy holiday plants can be irritating to your pet's mouth if eaten, and may cause mild vomiting or nausea.

• Christmas Tree Hazards

- Christmas tree water may contain fertilizers, which, if ingested, can upset the stomach. Stagnant tree water can be breeding grounds for bacteria, which can also lead to vomiting, nausea, and diarrhea, if ingested.
 - Electrical cords - Avoid animal exposure to electrical cords. If they are chewed they could electrocute your pet. Cover up or hide electrical cords and never let your pet chew on them.
 - Ribbons or tinsel can become lodged in the intestines and cause intestinal obstruction. This is a very common situation for kittens!
 - Batteries contain corrosives, and if ingested they can cause ulceration to the mouth, tongue, and the rest of the gastrointestinal tract.
 - Glass ornaments can cause internal laceration when ingested.
- If you suspect that your pet has eaten a potentially toxic substance, call your veterinarian or the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center's emergency hotline--1-888-4-ANI-HELP--for round-the-clock telephone assistance. For more information on poison prevention, visit <http://www.napcc.aspc.org>.

CHOCOLATE TOXICOSIS December 2000

For many people, overindulging in holiday goodies may result in a few extra pounds--but the consequences for our animal companions are much greater if they accidentally ingest cookies, candy or baked goods containing chocolate. In any form ranging from one-ounce baking squares to brownies, chocolate contains theobromine and caffeine, both methylxanthines that can cause stimulation of the central nervous system, an increase in heart rate and tremors. Clinical symptoms--vomiting, diarrhea, seizures, hyperactivity, and increased thirst, urination and heart rate--can be seen with the ingestion of as little as 1/4 ounce of baking chocolate by a ten-pound dog.

"We seem to receive more calls involving chocolate toxicosis during Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas, Valentine's Day and Easter," says Jill A. Richardson, DVM, of the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center (APCC). Just after the Thanksgiving holiday last month, she handled a case involving Sophie, an 18-pound cocker spaniel who'd eaten an 18-ounce box of milk chocolate truffles. "She'd ingested a dangerous level of chocolate, had already vomited several

times and was drinking large amounts of water."

Richardson worked in conjunction with Sophie's veterinarian to provide emergency treatment, which included activated charcoal, intravenous fluids and medication for her elevated heart rate. Reports Richardson, "She'd recovered by morning, but spent the day in doggie day care to make sure she didn't have further problems."

Although chocolate toxicosis is more common in dogs, who have been known to eat candy and trays of brownies and fudge accidentally left out, it is a potential problem with any species, Richardson says. Take care this holiday season to keep all candy out of your pets' reach--and don't let them in the kitchen unsupervised when you're baking. If you suspect your pet has eaten chocolate, call your veterinarian or the APCC's emergency hotline 1-888-4-ANI-HELP--for round-the-clock telephone assistance. For more information on poison prevention, visit <http://www.napcc.asPCA.org>.

How Much Chocolate Is Toxic?

This depends on the pet's weight, as well as the type and amount of chocolate consumed. Cocoa beans and baking chocolate have the highest amount of stimulants, white chocolate has the least.

- **Baking chocolate:** 0.1 ounce per pound body weight. A one-ounce square of bakers' chocolate is toxic to a 10-pound dog or a 10-pound cat.
- **Sweet cocoa:** 0.3 ounces per pound of body weight. One sixth of a pound of sweet cocoa is toxic to a 10-pound dog or for a 10-pound cat
- **Milk chocolate:** 1 ounce per pound of body weight. Approximately one half pound of milk chocolate is toxic to the nervous system of a 10-pound dog or for a 10-pound cat. There is a similar toxic level for semi-sweet chocolate.
- **White chocolate:** 200 ounces per pound of body weight. It takes 125 pounds of white chocolate to cause nervous-system toxicity signs in a 10-pound dog or a 10-pound cat.

Cocoa Bean Mulch Toxicosis

How does your garden grow? Not with cocoa bean mulch, please. A retrospective study just released by the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center (APCC) confirms that this commonly used fertilizer may deter slugs and snails, but it also attracts companion canines, who can be poisoned by eating it.

Made from spent cocoa beans used in the production of chocolate, cocoa bean mulch contains caffeine and theobromine, both of which are toxic to dogs. Depending on the amount ingested, symptoms range from vomiting and diarrhea (as exhibited by a 50-pound dog who had eaten about two ounces of the mulch) to tremors, seizures and death.

The study, which included six cases received and managed by veterinarians at the APCC between January 2002 and April 2003, was presented at last month's 2003 North American Congress of Clinical Toxicology. Comments Dr. Steven Hansen, the APCC's Senior Vice President, "Since the updated data confirms that dogs can exhibit certain clinical effects after consuming cocoa bean shell mulch fertilizer, the ASPCA advises pet owners that they should

avoid using this fertilizer around unsupervised dogs, and dogs with indiscriminate eating habits."

If you suspect that your dog has ingested this organic fertilizer--or any other potentially toxic substance--immediately contact your veterinarian or the APCC at (888) 426-4435 for 24-hour emergency assistance.

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COMMON-CENTS CAUTIONS FOR PET OWNERS

Humans aren't the only species with money troubles--did you know that pennies can be hazardous to your animal companion's health? One-cent coins minted after 1982 are made of copper plating around a core of potentially toxic zinc, which can cause kidney failure and damage red blood cells. And, reports the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center (APCC), zinc poisoning in pets can occur with the ingestion of a single penny.

In one such case, a dog had been vomiting for 3 days and was suffering from anemia and elevated kidney values when his regular veterinarian called the APCC for help. His owner had no idea if he'd eaten anything out of the ordinary, but the APCC suspected zinc toxicosis. Sure enough, x-rays revealed a metallic object in the stomach. Unfortunately, the penny had corroded and was embedded in the dog's stomach lining--and surgery was the only way to remove it. Reports APCC's Jill A. Richardson, DVM, "He recovered slowly, but totally, about ten days later. And now the owner is very cautious about dropping pennies in the house!"

Although zinc toxicosis from pennies is seen more often in dogs, there have been cases involving cats and larger species of pet birds. Adds Richardson, "It's also a common problem with large wild aquatic birds who eat pennies that people drop into ponds." Zoo animals suffer, too--particularly sea lions, seals and sea otters who ingest the coins thrown into their tanks. Please take care when visiting a zoo, pond or anywhere wildlife could be exposed. And if you suspect that your pet has eaten a penny--or any other potentially toxic substance--call your veterinarian or the APCC's emergency hotline at 1-888-4-ANI-HELP for round-the-clock telephone assistance. For more information on poison prevention, visit <http://www.napcc.asPCA.org>.



[Grapes and raisins toxic to dogs](#)

HOLD THE GUACAMOLE, POR FAVOR!

Thinking of giving Polly a little something extra with her cracker? While there are a few foods that both humans and pets can enjoy, there are others that, while perfectly palatable for people, can be dangerous to our animal companions. The fruit of the avocado, for example, poses a threat to a number of species.

"Avocados contain a toxic component called persin," explains Jill A. Richardson, DVM, of the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center (APCC), "which has been shown to produce cardiac tissue damage, respiratory distress and mammary gland damage in a variety of animals--including horses, goats, sheep, dogs, cattle, rabbits, fish and birds."

Consider the case of the cockatiel who had been given some guacamole by his owner. Within four hours of ingestion, the bird started behaving strangely--puffing his feathers and acting uncomfortable--and got progressively worse. The bird's owner brought him to an emergency clinic, and the veterinarian there contacted the APCC. Says Richardson, "We gave him recommendations on treating the animal--an oxygen cage and diuretics to remove the fluid on the bird's lungs." The animal was hospitalized for several days, but recovered. "And needless to say," adds Richardson, "guacamole is NOT on the menu any longer!"

If you suspect that your animal companion has eaten avocado--or any other potentially dangerous substance--call your veterinarian or the APCC's emergency hotline at 1-888-4-ANI-HELP for round-the-clock telephone assistance. For more information on poison prevention, visit aspca.org.

MACADAMIA NUTS A NO-NO FOR DOGS

They may be popular party fare, but they're no fun for domestic canines. If ingested, macadamia nuts can cause muscular weakness, depression, vomiting, incoordination, tremors, abdominal pain and muscle stiffness, reports Dr. Jill A. Richardson of the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center (APCC). "So far these symptoms have only been seen in dogs," says Richardson.

The APCC receives several calls each year from pet owners and veterinarians concerning macadamia nuts. One such case involved a seven-year-old Dalmatian who reportedly ate three pounds of macadamias. The nuts were intended for use in a bakery and had been stored in the freezer for about two years. After ingestion, the dog exhibited tremors in her rear legs, minor depression and vomiting. Following treatment--which included intravenous fluids and medications--she made a full recovery. In

another instance, an eight-year-old terrier mix ate about five ounces of macadamia nuts from a can that had been opened the night before. Her limbs were weak and she'd been shaking for about an hour. The dog didn't require treatment, but her doctor did keep her under observation for a day.

Although veterinarians aren't sure exactly what component in macadamia nuts makes them toxic, they do know that other nuts don't cause similar problems. If you suspect that your dog has eaten macadamia nuts--or any other potentially dangerous substance--call your veterinarian or the APCC's emergency hotline at 1-888-4-ANI-HELP for round-the-clock telephone

assistance.

MOTHBALLS

Traditionally used to prevent clothing from being eaten by moth larvae, mothballs are also scattered in backyards to repel deer, raccoons and other wild animals. But unfortunately, that hasn't stopped domestic animals from getting into this toxic household product. According to the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center (APCC), the ingestion of just one mothball can cause serious problems in dogs and cats. Symptoms include vomiting, lethargy, seizures and blood disorders. Kidney failure and coma can develop in severe cases.

"Mothballs are supposed to repel animals, but they don't always," says APCC's Jill A. Richardson, DVM, who remembers an emergency call from a pet owner who reported that her cat had bluish gums and seemed very depressed.

"The owners mentioned that they had sprinkled some mothballs around an opened closet, and their son said he saw the cat lick some of them," says Richardson. The owners were instructed to bring their pet to the local animal hospital, and the veterinarian there consulted the APCC for recommended treatment--which included, in this case, medication, blood transfusions and oxygen therapy, "as the cat's blood was not carrying oxygen well," explains Richardson. Treatment continued for several days, and the cat was later released to her owner.

To prevent this from happening in your home or backyard, always keep mothballs in areas that aren't accessible to pets, and keep in mind that the most dangerous mothballs are the old-fashioned type, which contain 100-percent naphthalene. "Paradichlorvos is a safer type to use," says Richardson. And if you suspect that your pet has ingested a mothball--or any other potentially dangerous substance--call your veterinarian or the APCC's emergency hotline at 1-888-4-ANI-HELP for round-the-clock telephone assistance. For more information on poison prevention, visit

<http://www.apcc.asPCA.org>.

Poinsettias

[Poinsettias, poisoning and pets-should you believe the hype? Info form the ASPCA](#)

Easter Lily

A toxic plant that causes kidney failure that can be fatal when ingested. If ingestion of this plant is suspected, contact a veterinarian immediately. Treatment must begin within six hours. [More info from the ASPCA](#)

Counterfeit Pesticide Products for Dogs and Cats

EPA information: <http://epa.gov/pesticides/factsheets/petproduct.htm>

Xylitol Poisoning

Xylitol, a sugar substitute found in gum can be very dangerous for dogs because it can a fatal drop in

blood sugar as well as hepatitis. The toxic dose of xylitol for dogs is considered to be about 0.05 grams per pound of body weight (about 0.023 grams per pound). A stick

of gum contains about 0.3 to 0.4 grams of xylitol, which means that a 10 lb dog could be poisoned by

a stick and a half of gum. [more info](#)

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