

Pesticide Poisoning in Pets – Part 2

by Heidi Napier, DVM

UCCE / El Dorado County Master Gardener

Last week, the Master Gardener article focused on insecticides that can be poisonous to pets. In this week's article, the focus is on an additional group of pesticides that can also be toxic to pets. Master Gardeners continue to emphasize the minimal use of these products because they not only can be harmful to beneficial insects and wildlife, but may poison your pet.

Always read and carefully follow all precautions and safety recommendations given on the container label, especially the fine print. Pesticides can cause serious problems when they aren't used as directed; sometimes even when they are used as directed. Take the time to know how to properly apply a pesticide, or decide upon an alternative, less toxic solution. The important part of the label is the fine print: the ingredients, the warnings on the back, and the toll free number. If your pest is poisoned, bring the label to your veterinarian and call the toll free number to get valuable information on toxicity and treatment.

Snail Baits

Snail baits are very attractive to dogs. Some dogs like the taste so much that they will eat dirt that has bait mixed into it. Metaldehyde is very toxic. It causes violent muscle tremors and seizures. A newer snail/slug bait containing iron phosphate is available, and it is safe for pets. You must read the ingredient list to determine whether a bait has metaldehyde or iron phosphate. Beer is a popular snail bait that is also attractive to many dogs. It doesn't poison them, but it seems a shame to waste beer on dogs.

Rodent Bait

There are three types of rodent baits available: anticoagulants, bromethalin and cholecalciferol (vitamin D3). Save the label because all three are treated very differently. They are all very attractive to dogs.

Anticoagulants are the most common; the antidote is large doses of vitamin K. These anticoagulants take days or weeks to cause bleeding, and they last 2-5 weeks. They include brodifacoum, bromodiolone, diphacinone, indandione and warfarin. Warfarin is also known by the trade name Coumadin and is used in humans as a "blood thinner" for patients who are susceptible to blood clots, so it is a useful drug in the correct dose.

Bromethalin has no antidote. Brands include Jaguar, Rampage, Hawk, Gladiator, Hot Shot, Sudden Death, Mouse Killer, Vengeance, Assault and Trounce. The label may say "kills rats and mice with one dose."

Cholecalciferol (vitamin D3) has no antidote. Some brands are Quintox, Rampage, Ortho Rat or Mouse B-Gone, True Grit and Hyperkil. Cholecalciferol (vitamin D3) is a necessary vitamin, but very toxic in large doses.

Plastic "Bait Boxes" will not keep any self-respecting dog with teeth from getting the bait. Even when used as directed, there are no guarantees that your dog will not find a way to gain access.

Use the same kind of safeguards you would for a toddler; assume that their curiosity and natural determination will circumvent the best of your logic and pre-planning.

University of California Integrated Pest Management practices provide non-toxic alternatives for your home garden that will keep your pets safe. Refer to the IPM Pest note on the safe and effective use of pesticides in the home and landscape at <http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn74126.html>.

Remember, all pesticides are poisonous. Store all chemicals in the original labeled containers in a locked cabinet or shed, away from food or feeds, and out of the reach of children, unauthorized persons, pets, and livestock.

To simplify information trade names of products have been used. No endorsement of named products is intended, nor is criticism implied of similar products which are not mentioned.

Join Master Gardeners this Saturday, March 17th for Part 2 of Organic Gardening. This free three-hour class starts at 9 a.m. and is held in the Veterans Memorial Building, 130 Placerville Dr. in Placerville.

Mark your calendar for the Master Gardener Plant Sale on Saturday, April 28th. There will be a great selection of annuals, perennials and vegetables, especially tomato seedlings. The sale is from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. and will be held in the Veterans Memorial Building parking lot.

Master Gardeners are available to answer home gardening questions Tuesday through Friday, 9 a.m. to noon, by calling (530) 621-5512. Walk-ins are welcome. The office is located at 311 Fair Lane in Placerville. For more information about our public education classes and activities, go to our Master Gardener website at http://ucanr.org/sites/EDC_Master_Gardeners/. Sign up to receive our online notices and e-newsletter at <http://ucanr.org/mgenews/>. You can also find us on Facebook.