



Pets and Pesticide Use

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Pets are an important part of our lives. The animals that share our homes, yards and properties rely on us for protection and safety. Some pesticide products used in and around our homes, in our yards and on our lawns can harm our pets and other domestic animals if not used properly.

How can pesticides harm my animals?

A pesticide is any substance used to kill a pest. This includes products that control insects or rodents around the home, weeds in the yard, even germs in the bathroom. All these products are designed to kill pests. Some may be harmful to our animals, especially if not used properly. Similar to humans, pesticides can be absorbed into your pet's bloodstream through mucous membranes, including the eyes, nose or mouth. They can also be absorbed when your pet consumes them by eating insecticide or rodenticide baits or licking their feet after walking through a pesticide-treated area.

What can I do to minimize the risk to my pets and other domestic animals?

Start by confirming that you have a pest problem. Get the pest identified by a reliable source, such as your state Department of Agriculture or Cooperative Extension office. Always choose the

- Ingestion of pesticides was the highest reported route of exposure in pet pesticide poisonings in the state of Nevada in 2008 (89%).
- Ant and roach baits were the most commonly ingested pesticide, with rodenticides (mice and rat poisons) a close second.
- Most of the animals reported were dogs, and most of the dogs were young.

least-toxic pesticide to control the pest. Pesticide users are required by law to read and follow label directions. Label directions tell how to mix, apply and store the pesticide. Most importantly for our pets, they tell you how long to exclude pets from the treated area.

What about outdoor pesticide use?

Start by reading the label directions, and make sure to follow them carefully. Remove your animals, their food, water, dishes and toys from the area to be treated. Keep your pets and other domestic animals out of pesticide-treated areas until the pesticide has completely dried. This will avoid potential injury to your pet and prevent pesticide residues from being tracked into your home, reducing the risk to your family. Even after a pesticide has dried, there are still residues left on plant materials. Don't let your pet or domestic animal lick, chew or eat any plants or other items treated with pesticides, even after the pesticides have dried.

Outdoor baits, such as rodenticides or insecticides, can also be very attractive to animals. Many of these products are highly toxic to pets. Place baits in areas that are accessible to the pests, such as bait stations, but that pets and other domestic animals cannot enter. Don't forget about neighboring pets or wildlife. Try to minimize their exposure during a pesticide application. Be especially careful near their water sources.

What about indoor pesticides?

Indoor pesticides include bait stations, perimeter sprays and foggers (bug bombs). Insect and rodent bait stations should be located in areas inaccessible to pets or domestic animals. Many of these baits contain ingredients to attract pests and make them

seem appetizing. Your pets and domestic animals may also find them attractive.

Allow perimeter sprays for insects to dry completely before pets or domestic animals are allowed near the treated areas. Make sure the areas are well-ventilated during the drying process.

Use indoor foggers or “bug bombs” with caution. Follow all label directions. Remove pets and their food, toys and bedding from the house. Cover fish tanks to prevent liquid vapors or dusts from entering them. Since foggers create fine mists, the pesticides they contain may move all through the home, including fish tank pumps. You may also want to consider turning off your heat or central air conditioning unit so that the pesticide dust is not circulated all through the house.

What about using pesticides on my pet?

Use care when applying pesticides directly on your pet or other domestic animals. It is especially important to following label directions when directly applying pesticides. Use the correct formulation for your animal. Never use pesticides labeled for dogs only on cats or other domestic animals. Products formulated for adult animals should not be used on younger animals unless specifically allowed by the label. Use the correct amount for the animal being treated. Most topical formulations are applied based on the animal’s weight. Using more product than the label allows can poison your pet.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has reported some adverse pet reactions to “spot-on” flea and tick prevention products (<http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/health/petproductseval.html>). Watch your animal closely after an application of topical pesticides, especially if it is the first time using a particular product. Another option is to use pharmaceuticals to control parasites, rather than external topical pesticides. Contact your veterinarian for further information.

You may want to separate your pets after applying a pesticide to prevent licking, rubbing or touching of untreated or younger animals by the treated animal. Follow all label instructions to protect yourself and your home while applying pesticides to

pets. Pets and other domestic animals can be prone to shaking, jumping, rubbing or other behaviors that may cause unwanted pesticide exposures to you and your family.

What should I do if I think my pet has been poisoned?

If you suspect your pet or domestic animal may have been inadvertently exposed to pesticides, or if your pet is having difficulty breathing, acts strangely, has excessive salivation, appears lethargic, or has tremors or seizures, immediately contact your veterinarian or call:

- National Pesticide Information Center, 1-800-858-7378
- ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center, 1-888-426-4435 (a consultation fee may apply)

Many pesticide labels provide a 24-hour emergency contact number. If you have applied a pesticide recently, have the pesticide container with the label handy when talking to your vet or the poison control center. The pesticide label also contains information about treatment for exposure.

Our pets and domestic animals count on us for their safety and well-being. Always:

- Read and follow label directions.
- Try to use the least-toxic pesticide available to control your pest.
- Place baits in areas inaccessible to pets and domestic animals.
- Store pesticides in safe, secure areas.
- Clean up all pesticide spills immediately.

References

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