

## **Top 10 Pet Poisons of 2008**

In 2008, the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), Animal Poison Control Center (APCC) handled more than 140,000 cases of pets exposed in the home to toxic substances, many of which included everyday household products. Below is a list of the top ten pet poisons that affected pets in 2008.

### **Human Medications**

Last year, the ASPCA managed more than 50,000 calls involving prescription and over-the-counter drugs, such as painkillers, cold medications, antidepressants and dietary supplements. Pets often snatch pill vials from counters and nightstands or gobble up medications accidentally dropped on the floor.

### **Insecticides**

In 2008, our toxicologists fielded more than 31,000 calls related to insecticides. One of the most common incidents involved the misuse of flea and tick products—such as applying the wrong topical treatment to the wrong species.

### **People Food**

People food like grapes, raisins, avocado and certain citrus fruit can seriously harm our furry friends, and accounted for more than 13,500 cases in 2008. One of the worst offenders—chocolate—contains large amounts of methylxanthines, which, if ingested in significant amounts, can cause vomiting, diarrhea, panting, excessive thirst, urination, hyperactivity, and in severe cases, abnormal heart rhythm, tremors and seizures.

### **Rodenticides**

Last year, the ASPCA received approximately 8,000 calls about pets that had accidentally ingested rat and mouse poisons. Many baits used to attract rodents contain inactive ingredients that are attractive to pets as well. Depending on the type of rodenticide, ingestions can lead to potentially life-threatening problems for pets, including bleeding, seizures and kidney damage.

### **Veterinary Medications**

Even though veterinary medications are intended for pets, they're often misapplied or improperly dispensed by well-meaning clients. In 2008, the ASPCA managed nearly 8,000 cases involving animal-related preparations such as non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, heartworm preventatives, de-wormers, antibiotics, vaccines and nutritional supplements.

### **Chemical Hazards**

In 2008, there were approximately 7,500 cases of pet exposure to chemical hazards. A category on the rise, chemical hazards—found in ethylene glycol antifreeze, paint thinner, drain cleaners and pool/spa chemicals—form a substantial danger to pets. Substances in this group can cause gastrointestinal upset, depression, respiratory difficulties and chemical burns.

### **Plants**

Common houseplants were the subject of nearly 6,500 calls in 2008. Varieties such as azalea, rhododendron, sago palm, lilies, kalanchoe and schefflera are

often found in homes and can be harmful to pets. Lilies are especially toxic to cats, and can cause life-threatening kidney failure even in small amounts.

**Household Cleaners**

Last year, the ASPCA received more than 4,000 calls related to household cleaners, bleaches, detergents and disinfectants. These products, when inhaled, can cause serious gastrointestinal distress and irritation to the respiratory tract.

**Heavy Metals**

Heavy metals such as lead, zinc and mercury accounted for more than 3,000 cases of pet poisonings in 2008. Lead is especially pernicious, and pets are exposed to it through many sources, including consumer products, paint chips, linoleum, and lead dust produced when surfaces in older homes are scraped or sanded.

**Fertilizer**

Last year, the ASPCA fielded more than 2,000 calls related to fertilizer exposure. Prevention is really key to avoiding accidental exposure.