

Spring Cleaning

By: Crystal McLeod, RAHT

Spring is also a great time to do a little of that "spring cleaning". Here are some tips on spotting potential pet hazards around the home.

Human Medications

One of the most common household poisons are medications - either discovered by the pet or purposely administered by the owner. Everyone is familiar with the "Keep out of reach of children" warnings, but may underestimate their pets. Pets have an advantage over children -- their strong jaws and teeth can chew through many "child safe" bottles.

Pest Control Baits and Poisons

Rat and mouse poisons and any other baits, such as slug and snail bait should be used with *extreme* caution in a household with pets.

These items are *baits* -- they are made to entice animals to eat. Hiding the box behind the cupboard is not guaranteed safe, either. Pets have been known to move furniture or items to reach poisons. Also, other animals or events may move the poison into easy reach.

Flea and Tick Treatments

No one wants to deal with fleas and ticks and all of the problems they present. However, in the effort to rid your pet of these parasites, caution is advised -- these treatments are also toxins (designed to kill the parasites)! Used at the recommended dosages and protocols, pesticides should be safe for the animals that they are intended to be used on.

A common mistake is to apply dog topicals to cats. Cats may also suffer toxic exposure by being close to or licking other pets who have had topicals applied.

Lawn and Garden Herbicides and Pesticides

Use of chemicals on lawns and gardens to control insects and weeds is common for many households. These chemicals are *not* intended for use on animals, so be sure to allow for proper drying time in the area before releasing pets to roll in, eat, or otherwise have contact with treated areas and plants. Store all containers in safe areas and dispose of empty containers safely.

Many fertilizers cause gastrointestinal upset. Some may be combined with pesticides and/or herbicides, which can be harmful or fatal to pets.

If at all possible, it is best reduce or eliminate the use of yard chemicals. Check with local pest and garden centers -- many now offer non-toxic, organic alternatives for pest and weed control.

Household Cleaners and Chemicals

Products used to clean the house, do laundry and dishes, maintain pools and hot tubs, and maintenance products such as paints and lubricants all pose a risk to curious or bored pets.

Never assume that because the product is in a spray bottle or can that it is "safe". Newer products will have safety information about the product, often with a phone number to call in the event of ingestion or exposure.

Antifreeze (Ethylene glycol)

Antifreeze is a deadly poison. Even if you aren't a mechanic working on cars in the driveway, cars may leak this fluid at any time of the year. It is a bright green-yellow liquid that is sweet to the taste, attracting pets. One swallow may be lethal for small animals.

