



# Common Household Products that Are Poisonous to Pets

**Most of us think of our homes as a clean, safe oasis**, but what if the everyday products you're using aren't the best for the health of your family and pets? Dogs eat anything that lands on the floors, cats lick themselves clean, and birds have more fragile respiratory systems. Go through your home and keep these products in mind when using around your pets, learn how to properly store them, and recognize signs that your pet has ingested a toxin.

## Attic/Basement

■ **Pest control products:** Mothballs, rodenticides, and insecticides are commonly used in these spaces, and often in high quantities since humans don't normally inhabit these areas. If you use them, prevent your pets from having access to these rooms. Whether the pest control products are solid or liquid and ingested in small or large quantities, the consequences can include fever, vomiting, diarrhea, pale or brown gums, weakness or lethargy, labored breathing, tremors and/or seizures.

## Garage/Yard

- **Paint:** Spaces with fresh paint or open containers should be well-ventilated; store in a place that's not accessible to your pets. Household paint—whether water-based, oil-based, latex, or unleaded—has varying degrees of toxicity to pets, but even if consumed in only small amounts, a veterinarian should be alerted. Symptoms can include mild gastrointestinal upset, nausea, vomiting, respiratory irritation, and incoordination.
- **Ice melt products:** Even if you don't have these products in your home, be aware that they are commonly applied to streets and sidewalks where your pet may walk. So, while your pet may not directly ingest an ice melt product (e.g., sodium chloride, potassium chloride, magnesium chloride, calcium salts, urea), they often love to play in the snow and go for walks in colder weather. In general, most ice melt exposures are limited to



gastrointestinal upset and local dermal irritation, but there is a potential for more serious, life-threatening side effects such as hemorrhagic vomiting or diarrhea, raised sodium levels in the blood, irregular heartbeat, rapid and shallow breathing, and hyperthermia.

- **Antifreeze:** This product is extremely toxic to any animal that ingests it, even in negligent quantities, so store in a place that's inaccessible to curious pets. If you have even the slightest suspicion your pet has gotten into antifreeze, contact your veterinarian immediately. Within hours, signs will include depression, staggering, seizures, increased drinking and urinating, and vomiting. Although they may seem better within a day, symptoms will worsen to include kidney failure and likely death.
- **Gasoline and kerosene:** Most people keep gas and kerosene on hand for cars, grills, etc., but keeping them out of your pet's way

is crucial. Symptoms of poisoning can occur immediately following exposure, whether it was inhaled, consumed or touched.

Look for respiratory irritation, drooling, mouth ulcers, skin lesions, abdominal pain, gastrointestinal upset, confusion, or collapse.

- **Fertilizer/Herbicides:** While the margin of safety is generally pretty high when it comes to distributed fertilizers (solid granules or liquid sprays), if an animal directly ingests fertilizer there can be symptoms of drooling, vomiting, diarrhea, tremors and seizures. Some fertilizer products contain even more dangerous elements such as iron and insecticides, which can contain carbamates or organophosphates, though these are rare nowadays.

### Living Spaces

- Many cleaners and disinfectants contain harmful ingredients, even some that are labeled “natural” or “green.” Exposure to these products results in skin, respiratory, and gastrointestinal irritation that can range from flaky skin to internal bleeding. Look out for these chemicals that are toxic to pets and where you can find them:
  - **Chlorine** is the main ingredient in bleach and can also be found in laundry detergents, dishwasher detergents, toilet bowl cleaners, and all-purpose cleaners. Opt for an oxygen bleach instead for deep cleans and stain removal.
  - **Ammonia** is a highly effective cleaning agent, yet can cause severe damage to your pet’s eyes, skin, lungs, and stomach when inhaled or ingested. Avoid oven cleaners, window cleaners, floor waxes, and drain cleaners with ammonia.
  - **Glycol Ethers** help cut grease when soap and water aren’t strong enough. Often labeled as 2-Methoxyethanol, 2-Ethoxyethanol, and 2-Butoxyethanol, they show up in many “green/natural” cleaners even though research

has shown them to cause cancer, birth defects, and delayed development in lab rats, as well as anemia, eye and nose irritation, and weight loss in companion animals.

- **Formaldehyde** is used in cleaning products for its antibacterial effects. It is a known carcinogen to humans yet can still be found in the ingredients list under the names formalin, formic aldehyde, methanediol, methanol, methyl aldehyde, methylene glycol, and methylene oxide
- **Phthalates** are used in countless household products for fragrance. They are known hormone disruptors which can mess with your pet’s reproductive system, as well as cause weight gain, cancers, and developmental delays. The most commonly known phthalate is BPA, which is often found in pet bowls and toys.
- **Cationic surfactants** contain chemicals like benzalkonium chloride and cetrimonium bromide which highly toxic to dogs and cats and are found in fabric softener and dryer sheets. Dermal contact can occur in skin irritation and even burns, while ingestion can cause ulcers, lung damage, central nervous system depression, and acute kidney disease. Ingestion of dryer sheets can even cause a blockage.

With any potentially harmful household product, take measures to minimize your pet’s exposure. Keep areas well-ventilated when these products are in use, store them in locked cupboards or closets when not in use, always keep an eye out for unusual behavior, and consult a veterinarian if symptoms do occur. ■