

Common Household Dangers for Pets

Dangers just outside your door

Antifreeze that contains ethylene glycol has a sweet taste that attracts animals but is deadly if consumed in even small quantities; one teaspoon can kill a seven-pound cat. The HSUS recommends pet owners use a safe antifreeze in their vehicles. Look for antifreeze that contains propylene glycol, which is safe for animals if ingested in small amounts. Ethylene glycol can also be found in common household products like snow globes, so be sure to keep these things out the reach of animals. Read more about antifreeze hazards »

Cocoa mulch contains ingredients that can be deadly to pets if ingested. The mulch, sold in garden supply stores, has a chocolate scent that is appetizing to some animals.

Chemicals used on lawns and gardens, such as fertilizer and plant food, can be easily accessible and fatal to a pet allowed in the yard unsupervised.

De-icing salts used to melt snow and ice are paw irritants that can be poisonous if licked off. Paws should be washed and dried as soon as the animal comes in from the snow. Other options include doggie boots with Velcro straps to protect Fido's feet, and making cats indoor pets.

Cans and garbage can pose a danger when cats or smaller dogs attempt to lick food from a disposed can, sometimes getting their head caught inside the can. To be sure this doesn't happen, squeeze the open end of the can closed before disposing.

Traps and poisons Pest control companies frequently use glue traps, live traps and poisons to kill rodents. Even if you would never use such methods to eliminate rodents, your neighbor might. Dogs and cats can be poisoned if they eat a rodent who has been killed by poison (called secondary poisoning).

Threats inside the house

Insect control products, such as the insecticides used in many over-the-counter flea and tick remedies, may be toxic to companion animals. Prescription flea and tick control products are much safer and more effective. Pet owners should never use any product without first consulting a veterinarian. Read more about potential poisoning from flea and tick products »

Human medications, such as pain killers (including aspirin, acetaminophen and ibuprofen), cold medicines, anti-cancer drugs, anti-depressants, vitamins and diet pills can all be toxic to animals. Keep medicine containers and tubes of ointments and creams away from pets who could chew through them, and be vigilant about finding and disposing of any dropped pills.

Poisonous household plants, including azalea, dieffenbachia (dumb cane), lilies, mistletoe and philodendron.

String, yarn, rubber bands and even dental floss are easy to swallow and can cause intestinal blockages or strangulation. **This also includes socks and underwear.**

Toys with movable parts—like squeaky toys or stuffed animals with plastic eyes—can pose a choking hazard to animals. Take the same precautions with pets as you would with a small child.

Rawhide dog chews may be contaminated with Salmonella, which can infect pets and humans who come in contact with the chews. This kind of treat should be offered to a pet only with supervision, as they can pose a choking hazard as well.

Holiday decorations and lights pose a risk to cats and dogs. Keep these items out of the reach of animals, and, if possible, confine your pet to an undecorated area while you are out of the home.

Chocolate is poisonous to dogs, cats and ferrets.

Leftovers, such as chicken bones, might shatter and choke a cat or dog. Human foods to keep away from pets include onions and onion powder; alcoholic beverages; yeast dough; coffee grounds and beans; salt; macadamia nuts; tomato, potato and rhubarb leaves and stems; avocados (toxic to birds, mice, rabbits, horses, cattle and dairy goats); grapes; and anything with mold growing on it.