

Acorns and Dogs Don't Mix

Keep puppies and dogs from eating acorns or drinking water with oak leaves in it.

By Jon Geller, DVM

Q. I have three dogs, a Border Collie-Australian Shepherd mix, a Border Collie and an Australian Shepherd. The mix has been eating dirt and acorns. The Border occasionally eats dirt or licks it, and eats acorns. The Aussie also eats acorns. I feed a good quality food, and they have water at all times. Any ideas? Are acorns harmful? Thanks for any information.

A. Many people do not realize that acorns are toxic to dogs. The toxic principle is unknown, but they do contain gallotannins, a combination of gallic acid and tannic acid. Oak trees are very common and most people don't have problems, but they are not the trees of choice to have in a backyard full of pets. Acorns, oak buds, leaves, and drinking water that acorns and oak leaves have soaked in, have all caused symptoms of oak poisoning.

Dogs have been poisoned by drinking water that oak leaves have soaked in. Two Chihuahua puppies were seen chewing on a couple of acorns. They developed a bloody diarrhea and their kidney values became markedly elevated. In spite of emergency treatment, they died of renal failure.

Acorns could potentially cause an obstruction of the intestines, but this would probably occur in a smaller dog.

If possible, minimize your dogs' exposure to acorns, and be especially careful that their water bowl is not contaminated.