

Dogs Most Likely Pet to Eat Toxins

ASPCA's Animal Poison Control Center releases statistics on dog-related calls.

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The majority of the 100,000-plus calls pet owners made to the Animal Poison Control Center (APCC) last year involved incidents with common household items, reported the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), which manages the hotline. Dogs, America's favorite pets, were the most likely of all animals to chow down on a toxic substance, according to the APCC call records. This could be related "in part to their indiscriminate eating habits," an ASPCA representative commented.

Human medications, such as cold medicine, topped the call list with 78,000 individual cases handled by APCC. Not far behind that were pet poisonings from insecticides, including flea and tick treatments, and more than 12,000 cases related to health products for animals, such as de-wormers, nutritional supplements and antibiotics.

"Although these products are formulated for use in pets, it is very important to always read and follow label directions for use exactly," said veterinary toxicologist Steven Hansen, DVM, DABVT, the senior vice president for APCC. "As with flea and tick preparations, many medications are intended for use in certain species only, and potentially serious problems could result if given to the wrong animal or at too high a dose."

The organization tallied calls in seven other key categories for pet poisonings: In descending order these included plants (lilies, azaleas, rhododendrons, etc.); rodenticides; household cleaners; chocolate (a favorite of dogs); chemical hazards, such as paint thinners and drain cleaners, which received an "astronomical jump in call volume" from 2005; physical hazards, such as choking or ingestion of common items – even pet collars; and home improvement products.

Staffed by veterinary professionals, including toxicologists, the Urbana, Ill., APCC can be reached at (888) 426-4435 24 hours a day, seven days a week.