

Dog Owners Warned of Sago Palm Poisonings

Popular plant contains toxic compounds that can cause liver failure in dogs.

Posted: July 21, 2008, 5 a.m. EDT

During the past five years, cases of pet poisonings from a popular palm have increased more than 200 percent, according to the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

Sago Palm – a stocky, spiky-leaved member of the Cycad family of plants – has found its way into more residential landscapes in the sunny climates of the southern United States. In recent years, miniature or “bonsai” versions of Sago Palm have also become common in homes of people living in the cooler, drier northern parts of the country.

Dog owners, however, are advised to be cautious: Sago Palm is highly toxic. Sago and other cycad palms contain toxic chemicals that can potentially produce vomiting and diarrhea, weakness, shaking and even liver failure and death in cats and dogs.

The bright, red seed is not the only poisonous portion. All parts of these plants are toxic, said Dr. Sharon Gwaltney-Brant, veterinary toxicologist and vice president of the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center.

According to the Center’s data, 50 to 75 percent of cases involving ingestion of Sago Palm result in death, further illustrating the danger that the plant poses. Pet owners are urged to take the necessary precautions to prevent their furry friends from coming into contact with Sago Palms in and around the house.

“Because pet parents and possibly veterinarians in northern regions of the country where these plants are becoming more popular may not be as familiar with the toxic effects of Cycad Palms, we feel that it is critical to get information out about their toxic potential,” Gwaltney-Brant said.

A list of non-toxic plants is available at www.asPCA.org/nontoxic.