High Levels of Toxic Chemicals Found in Dogs

Study finds dogs and cats contaminated with 48 of 70 industrial chemicals tested.

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A new study indicates that dogs and cats are exposed to complex mixtures of industrial chemicals, often at levels higher than humans.

The Environmental Working Group (EWG), a nonprofit research organization based in Washington D.C., undertook the study, “Polluted Pets,” to investigate how much exposure pets have to contaminants found in homes and outdoors.

“Like humans, pets are also exposed to toxic chemicals on a daily basis, and as this investigation found, are contaminated at higher levels,” said Jane Houlihan, vice president for Research at EWG.

“The presence of chemicals in dogs and cats sounds a cautionary warning for the present and future health of children as well. This study demonstrating the chemical body burden of dogs and cats is a wake-up call for stronger safety standards from industrial chemical exposures that will protect all members of our families, including our pets.”

The study, which analyzed blood and urine from 20 dogs and 40 cats, found that the dogs and cats were contaminated with 48 of 70 industrial chemicals tested, including 43 chemicals at levels higher than those typically found in people.

Thirty-five chemicals were detected in the dog group, 40 percent of which were at higher levels than people. The chemicals included 11 carcinogens, 31 chemicals toxic to the reproductive system, and 24 neurotoxins, according to the study.

Relative to the levels found in people, dogs showed high levels of stain- and grease-proof chemicals (perfluorochemicals in the Teflon family), plastics chemicals called phthalates, and fire retardants called PBDEs.

For example, levels of perfluorochemicals were 2.4 times higher in dogs than people. Possible sources of exposure include food contaminated with PFCs leaching from dog food bag coatings, house dust, and stain-proofed furniture, dog beds, and carpets.

Toxins in plastic toys and medicines were found at levels ranging between 1.1 and 4.5 times the average concentrations in people.

For the full report, visit www.ewg.org