



Protecting Your Pet from Pesticides¹

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This guide explains precautionary measures that can be used to protect pets from injury due to pesticides used in and around the home.

Pets are an integral part of our families. They provide us with constant, loyal companionship and friendship, and in turn they rely on us for care and protection. Some pesticide products used in and around the home can harm our pets if not used and stored correctly. Most pets are curious by nature; rodenticide bait stations carelessly placed around the homestead or sprays that have not been allowed to properly dry before re-entry are potential accidents waiting to happen.

Pesticides can be absorbed into your pet's bloodstream through their mucous membranes, such as their eyes, nose, and mouth. Depending upon the pesticide, some dry spray residues can cause injury when your pet chews on treated chew toys or ingests treated plants. If shortly after applying a pesticide, your pet shows lethargy, increased salivation, tremors, or convulsions, call your veterinarian immediately and have the suspected products label on hand.

Pesticide labels contain precautionary statement sections and have specific directions concerning hazards to humans and domestic animals. Check this section of the label before making the pesticide application. The label will provide information on:

- How to use the product safely and effectively;
- How to store the product safely;
- First aid instructions; and
- Phone numbers to call for help or additional information.

The best way to protect your pet when using pesticides is to use as much caution as possible. Prior to making an application, remove bedding, chew toys, and feed and water dishes that are in the intended area and keep the area well ventilated. Some products will have label statements regarding the length of time that the treated area should remain clear of people and pets. Statements regarding covering aquaria may also be present.

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Use pesticides safely. Read and follow directions on the manufacturer's label.

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Rodenticides

One of the most widely used type of rodenticide in and around indoor dwellings has been the anticoagulant products, such as warfarin. Generally, warfarin products contain relatively low percentages of active ingredient, and a one-time ingestion by a small domestic animal would unlikely cause toxic effects. Since there is usually a 3-day delay before the onset of clinical signs from the effects of anticoagulants, pet owners are allowed time to discover exposure evidence and seek veterinary care. Some of the newer rodenticides are just as, if not more, toxic than the traditional warfarin products, so caution must be taken in placement and service.

Pesticides in the Aquarium

There are hundreds of products registered with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services for use in home aquariums and ornamental fish ponds. Although these products may not be considered by many to be pesticides, they are registered as such with the EPA and State of Florida. Chlorinating solutions, bactericides, algicides, and various disinfectants are commonly available for use in and around the home. Check their product labels carefully for precautionary statements regarding pets and other domestic animals.

Products and Their Containers

The rule of thumb is to keep all products in their original containers. Also keep in mind:

- It is very dangerous to put products in food and beverage containers.
- Containers without tight-fitting lids can easily spill, allowing your pet access to the product.
- If you throw away the original container, you throw away important information needed in case of an emergency.
- If the label tells you to mix a product in another container, use all of the mixture. If you can't use all the mixture, label the new container for use in the future.

Keep Pets Away from Products

- Don't spray or store cleaning or pesticide products near pet food or water dishes.
- Make sure animals don't have access to bait products while they are in use.
- In the event of a spill, be sure to keep animals out of the area until it is cleaned up.
- Spraying outdoor products on a windy day can cause off-site movement of pesticides to water sources used by wildlife.
- Store all pesticides and household cleaners where pets can't access them.

Where to Get Help

- Most labels have a phone number listed on them for emergency purposes. In many cases, their phones are manned 24 hours a day.
- Keep your local poison control center phone number near the phone.
- Keep your veterinarian's phone number near the phone.
- In the event of an emergency and making a phone call, have the pesticide products label in-hand. The label provides those helping you with important information about the product.

Summary

Pets are our companions and deserve our care. Pesticide products can help alleviate pest problems in and around the home, but every pet's caretaker needs to take precautions.

Additional Information

Fishel, F.M. 2005. Pesticide toxicity profile: coumarin and indandione rodenticides. UF/IFAS EDIS Document PI-76. <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/PI113>.

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