



Is Your Home Safe 4-Your Pet



POISONS

Poisons are anything that cause harm to living cells. The harm they cause varies from mild reactions where you might not even recognize that anything is wrong with your pet to severe reactions such as vomiting, seizures and even death.

Many poisons are easy to recognize because the manufacturer clearly labels the package as harmful. However there are many items in our homes that we may never consider to be hazardous until it's too late.

In this handout we will take a look around a typical home to learn about many items that pet owners overlook as potential hazards.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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SAFETY IN THE LIVING ROOM

Your dog hasn't had a bath lately so your mom tries to cover the odor by setting out some liquid potpourri to hide the smell. Watch out! Your pet might be curious about what smells so good and thinks you have set out a snack. If eaten the **potpourri** is likely to cause a stomachache and may possibly lead to ulcers.



House plants can dress up your home but many of them can cause serious health problems and severe pain if eaten. Some of the more common plants that cause pet poisoning include **Peace Lily**, **Easter Lily** and **Dumb Cane**. Dumb cane got its name due to the fact that the severe pain it causes in a dog's mouth can keep them from moving their mouth for days, therefore they appear unable to speak.

For more information on plants that are safe around the house contact your Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service or your local veterinarian.

DANGERS IN THE KITCHEN

It's hard not sharing your meal with your pet, especially when they look so cute begging for just a small bite. However many of the foods that are safe for humans can cause harm to our pets.

Some of the food and beverage items that commonly cause pet health problems are

chocolate, onions, grapes, raisins, macadamia nuts, salt, fatty foods, garlic, alcohol, and coffee grounds. It is also important to avoid feeding **bones** to your pet. Bones can create a choking hazard or if they splinter they could puncture your pet's digestive tract.

Also don't forget to keep your kitchen **trash** secure. Old scraps may contain high concentrations of bacteria and molds that can easily lead to food poisoning just like in humans.

Many of the **cleaning products** we use in the kitchen or anywhere else in the house may contain ingredients that can cause vomiting, chemical burns, respiratory tract irritation or diarrhea in pets and humans. Keep these products in secure cabinets where your pet and young children can't reach them. Keep in mind that just making sure the lid is on tight will not prevent your dog from getting into the product if he decides the bottle would make a good chew toy.

Safely storing your cleaning products is the first step but you should also be conscious about where your pet is while you're using the product. Can the product be licked up by the cat or burn his paws while it is still wet on the floor? Will the fumes hurt your pet bird? The best place to start is by reading the label. Most products will indicate how long pets and children should be kept away from the cleaned surface.

As a general rule, pet birds have sensitive respiratory systems and they should be kept away from all chemical and cooking type fumes.



UNSCRAMBLE THE FOOD ITEMS THAT CAN CAUSE YOUR PET HEALTH PROBLEMS

- | | | | |
|--------------|-------|------------|-------|
| 1. ACHLOTOEC | _____ | 5. GSRPEA | _____ |
| 2. ONINOS | _____ | 6. RISAINS | _____ |
| 3. STHAR | _____ | 7. GALIRC | _____ |
| 4. TSAL | _____ | 8. BENOS | _____ |

SALT, ONIONS, TRASH, CHOCOLATE, BONES, RAISINS, GARLIC, GRAPES

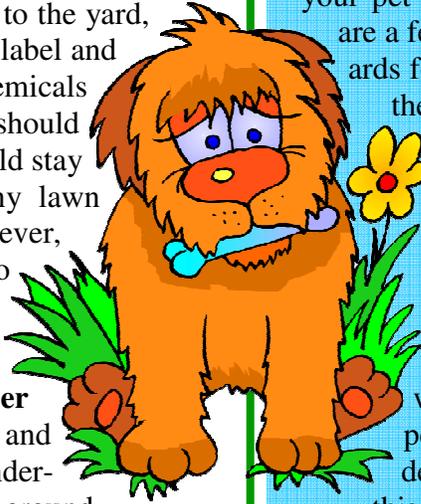
DANGERS IN THE YARD

There are many potential poisons that your pet can encounter in your yard. Lawn treatments such as **fertilizers** and **weed sprays** should be used with caution. Before applying chemicals to the yard, you and your parent should read the label and find out what kind of hazard the chemicals present for you and your pet. You should also find out how long your pet should stay away from the treated area. Many lawn sprays are safe once they dry. However, there are some that will continue to remain toxic until a rain or water sprinkler washes them away.

Keep your pet safe when using **power equipment** such as **lawn mowers** and **weed eaters**. Your pet doesn't understand how dangerous it is to play around equipment and could create a situation that puts you or your pet at risk. It's always best to keep your pet away from the area of the yard where you are working.

Just like in the house, there are also many plants outside that are toxic for pets. A few of the most common problem plants include **castor beans**, **wild mushrooms**, most **flower bulbs** and shrubs such as **Yew**, **Azalea** and **Holly**. Some garden plants and fruit trees can cause poisoning such as **onions**, **green tomatoes** and the stems and seeds from **apple trees**.

For more information about plants that are unsafe for your pet contact your Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service or your local veterinarian.



DANGER IN THE GARAGE

There are many potential hazards in the garage. Care should always be taken to keep items put away where your pet cannot get into them. Here are a few examples of possible hazards found in the garage. Many of the new expanding type **glues** can create serious problems for your pet. These glues might seem like a tasty treat while your pet is licking it up but once the glue is inside the digestive tract it will expand and plug up the works. This will cause your pet extreme pain and possible death. The only way to cure this kind of problem is with surgery to remove the mass of glue.

Anti-freeze is extremely toxic and can be fatal to your pet. For some reason pets like drinking it and many die from this each year.

Make sure that you keep all chemicals such as **anti-freeze**, **pool chemicals**, **insecticides**, **rat baits**, **gopher baits** and **ice melt**, put away in a sealed container where your pet can't reach them. It is also important to make sure that you carefully read the label and follow the instructions on how to properly dispose of unused chemicals and their containers.

GNAW THIS OVER

1. Give a presentation to your 4-H Club about keeping your home safe for your pet. Bring some examples of common items found in the home that can be harmful to your pet. Leave items that are hazardous to children such as anti-freeze at home and bring a picture instead.
2. Plan a 4-H Club visit to your local veterinarian. Ask about some of the common pet poisonings, as well as, some of the unusual pet poisoning they have seen.

UNSCRAMBLE ANSWERS

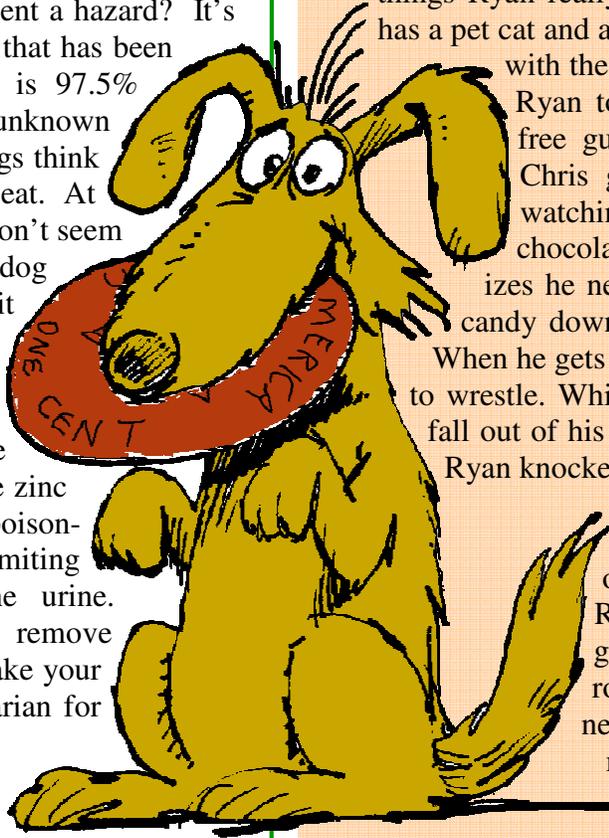
- 1) CHOCOLATE, 2) ONIONS, 3) TRASH, 4) SALT
- 2) 5) GRAPES, 6) RAISINS, 7) GARLIC, 8) BONES

BEDROOM HAZARDS

What kind of hazards might exist in your bedroom? At first look someone might think the only hazard is your smelly sneakers! Have you ever considered that your pocket change might present a hazard? It's true, every penny that has been made since 1982 is 97.5% zinc. For some unknown reason, a lot of dogs think pennies are fun to eat. At first, the pennies don't seem to be causing the dog any harm and it might even seem funny. However, the problem is the pennies stay in the stomach and cause zinc poisoning. Zinc poisoning can lead to vomiting and blood in the urine. The only way to remove the pennies is to take your pet to the veterinarian for surgery.

Do you put your gum away where your dog can't steal a piece or do you leave it in your backpack lying on the floor? Most pets think gum smells and tastes good. Gum is safe for humans but many sugar free gums contain **Xylitol** which can cause liver failure in your pet.

Many 4-H members and school kids enjoy making homemade play dough. It's fun to make and play with but it should be kept out of reach from your pet. Pets often mistake play dough for a fun snack but the high concentration of salt can lead to salt poisoning.



GNAW THIS OVER

READ THE STORY BELOW AND SEE HOW MANY PET HAZARDS YOU CAN FIND

Chris decided to invite his friend Ryan over after the 4-H meeting to watch movies and play games. One of the things Ryan really enjoys about Chris's house is Chris has a pet cat and a pet dog that always enjoy hanging out with the boys. When they get to Chris's house Ryan tosses his backpack that has his sugar free gum containing Xylitol on the ground. Chris gets some snacks and the boys start watching a movie. Ryan really likes the chocolate candy Chris gave him but he realizes he needs something to drink so he sets his candy down to get a drink from the refrigerator. When he gets back to the living room the boys begin to wrestle. While wrestling, Chris's money begins to fall out of his pockets but he doesn't notice because Ryan knocked the liquid potpourri off the end table.

They pick up the potpourri bowl and decide they need to clean up the spill off the floor. On the way to get a rag Ryan asks Chris about his new video game. They decide to go into Chris's room for a few minutes to look at his new game. Two hours later Chris's mom comes home and wants to know why the cat and dog are sick.

Can you list all of the potential pet hazards listed in this story?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

For more information about 4-H Companion Animal Projects log on to <http://oklahoma4h.okstate.edu/>.

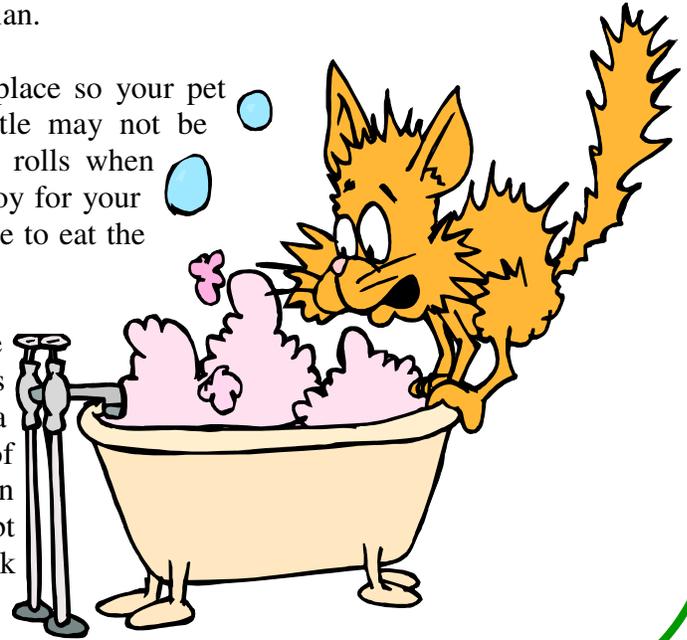
SAFETY IN THE BATHROOM

What are some of the hazards in your bathroom? Are your medicines kept in a safe place? Even some of the most basic over the counter **medicines** and **vitamins** can cause serious harm to pets.

Medicines for humans were designed to work with our human bodies but many medications react completely different in animals. For example, **Acetaminophen**, used in medications such as Tylenol®, it is commonly used to reduce fever and relieve pain in children and adults. Many people make the mistake of thinking it can help relieve their cat's pain and instead it causes their cat serious harm. Acetaminophen does not work the same way in cats and even in very small doses can cause your cat to have liver failure and red blood cell damage. Never give your pet human medication or vitamins unless directed by your veterinarian.

Make sure you keep all medications in a safe place so your pet can't reach them. Putting the lid on the bottle may not be enough, a small plastic bottle that rattles and rolls when knocked over may seem like an attractive play toy for your dog. Once he chews up the bottle he may decide to eat the medicine inside.

Insecticides used to control fleas and ticks are another common cause of pet poisoning. Always follow labels carefully on how to properly use a flea and tick shampoo, spray or any other type of insecticide. Never use a flea and tick product on your cat that is not labeled for cat use. If in doubt about how to safely use an insecticidal product ask your veterinarian.



WHAT CAN I DO?

The best thing pet owners can do is to plan ahead. Take the *Pet Safety Home Assessment* on the last page to find out what potential pet hazards are present in your home. Discuss possible hazards with your parents and veterinarian to determine the level of risk and the best way to minimize the risk.

If you suspect your pet has come in contact with a potential hazard, don't wait, call your veterinarian. Many of these toxins have a wide array of effects depending on the quantity ingested and the size and specie of your pet. Your veterinarian will be able to advise you about whether your pet needs immediate treatment or should just be watched closely. If possible keep the product container or a sample of the toxin to assist in the identification of the poison and treatment of your pet.

If you are unable to reach your veterinarian during an emergency, you can contact the Animal Poison Control Center at (888) 426-4435. There is a fee charged for using the Center.

PET SAFETY HOME ASSESSMENT CHECK SHEET ✓

GO ROOM TO ROOM THROUGH YOUR HOME AND SEE WHAT POTENTIAL HAZARDS YOU CAN FIND. WHAT CAN YOU DO TO PREVENT YOUR PET FROM BEING HARMED? ONCE YOU HAVE CORRECTED THE HAZARD CHECK IT OFF THE LIST.

LIVING AND BEDROOM HAZARDS

1. *Dumb Cane Plant* _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

CORRECTIVE ACTION

1. *Give the plant to a friend that doesn't have a pet* ✓
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

KITCHEN AND BATH HAZARDS

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

CORRECTIVE ACTION

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

YARD AND GARAGE HAZARDS

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

CORRECTIVE ACTION

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____