

Rodenticide Poisoning



- Many mouse and rat poisons contain ingredients that can be toxic and even fatal to your pet.
- These toxins may cause blood clotting problems, nervous system problems, or kidney failure.
- Signs of poisoning include pale gums, bruising, bleeding from the mouth or nose, seizures, and increased drinking and urination.
- If your pet has ingested a rodent poison, contact your veterinarian immediately.
- The product packaging will help identify the type of poison and the proper treatment.
- Diagnosis may require blood tests, blood clotting tests, and radiographs (x-rays).
- Treatment may involve hospitalization, medications to counteract the effect of the toxin, blood transfusions, intravenous fluids, and antiseizure medications.

What Is Rodenticide Poisoning?

Rodenticide poisoning occurs when dogs and cats accidentally eat mouse or rat poison. Any poison that is intended to kill a mouse or rat can be fatal to dogs and cats as well.

These products contain a wide range of ingredients that differ in potency and effect. In general, most rodent poisons cause one of three effects in animals:

- Blood clotting problems, resulting in internal hemorrhage (bleeding)
- Nervous system problems, including seizures and paralysis
- Kidney failure

If you think that your pet has eaten rodent poison, contact your veterinarian immediately. If your veterinarian is not available, call the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center at 1-888-426-4435. (You may be charged for the call.) It is helpful if you have the product packaging. Knowing the exact ingredients in the poison can help determine the best treatment for your pet.

Ingredients in rodent poisons that are potentially toxic to pets include brodifacoum, bromadiolone, bromethalin, chlorophacinone, cholecalciferol, coumarin, diphacinone, diphenthiolone, pindone, strychnine, warfarin, and zinc phosphate.

What Are the Signs of Rodenticide Poisoning?

The signs of rodenticide poisoning vary depending on the type and amount of poison consumed and the length of time since the pet consumed the poison. In some cases, signs may not appear until a few days after the pet has eaten the poison.

With products that cause clotting problems, signs of internal hemorrhage may not be obvious. Signs you might see include:

- Lethargy (tiredness), depression
- Pale gums
- Trouble breathing

- Bruising
- Bloody vomit, urine, or feces
- Bloody nose
- Bleeding from the gums

Pets that have eaten poisons that cause nervous system problems may show the following signs:

- Lethargy, depression
- Loss of appetite
- Stumbling, difficulty walking
- Seizures
- Paralysis

And products that lead to kidney failure may cause:

- Vomiting
- Increased drinking
- Increased urination

How Is this Condition Diagnosed?

Again, if you have the packaging from the rodent poison, bring it to the veterinary clinic with your pet. It will help your veterinarian determine the right diagnosis and treatment.

Depending on the suspected ingredient in the poison, your veterinarian may recommend blood tests, tests to assess the clotting ability of the blood, and radiographs (x-rays) to check for signs of internal bleeding.

How Is Rodenticide Poisoning Treated?

If your pet ate the poison within the past hour, your veterinarian may induce vomiting or anesthetize your pet to flush the poison from the stomach. He or she may also give your pet a liquid solution of activated charcoal to help minimize further gastrointestinal absorption of the poison.

If your pet has eaten a rodent poison that affects blood clotting, your veterinarian will likely begin administering medication to improve blood clotting. In some cases, this medication must be continued for several weeks.

Depending on the pet's condition, hospitalization and blood transfusions may also be necessary.

There are no antidotes for the poisons that affect the nervous system or the kidneys. Your veterinarian may need to give the pet antiseizure medications or intravenous fluids to help ease the symptoms until the poison is out of the pet's system.

How Can I Protect My Pet From Rodenticide Poisoning?

If you have to use rodent poison, keep it out of the reach of curious pets. That said, if rodents in your house eat poison, there's always a chance that your pet could eat a poisoned rodent. While the likelihood of this harming your pet is low, it may be a problem if the rodent has eaten large quantities of one of the newer kinds of rodenticides. When in doubt, contact your veterinarian.

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