

CANE TOAD TOXICITY

Toads are dangerous amphibians. They are a common cause of poisoning in dogs, however cats can be affected too.

Toads exude a milky white toxin mostly from poison glands behind their eyes, but elsewhere on their body as well. They squeeze this poison onto the surface of their skin when they are under threat. When treated roughly, they can even squirt the poison up to 2 metres.

Dogs and cats are poisoned when they mouth the toad or sometimes when the toad's poison gets into their eyes.

The toad's poison is also dangerous to humans and deaths have occurred. Some adults have been affected when they absorbed the poison through cuts in the skin after handling a toad.

Toads were introduced into Australia in 1935 to control the Cane Beetle - a disastrous move as toads have no natural enemies in Australia. Terrier and Staffordshire Bull Terrier breeds tend to be the most often affected. If you think your pet has been affected, you need to know what to do.

Due to its corrosive and irritant nature, the toads venom will cause profuse salivation soon after your pet bites it. Pets affected by the irritant venom will paw their mouth due to the pain. If you see your pet drooling and distressed but haven't seen it attack a toad, look at their gums. If they are red and inflamed, toad poisoning is likely.

Vomiting often occurs, especially in cats. Cats can show hindquarter weakness and a fixed trance like stare. If your dog has been poisoned, it will usually suffer from seizures or convulsions. These convulsions are often fatal unless urgent veterinarian attention is obtained. The toxin can also affect the heart of dogs and cats, causing an immediate cardiac arrest.

Rubbing the teeth and gums with a soft rag and water may also help to remove the toxin. PLEASE DO NOT PUT A RUNNING HOSE INTO YOUR PETS MOUTH.

Toads are a nocturnal menace, to prevent the problem, only allow your dog outside at night if you are with them. Take them out on the lead if they are prone to chasing toads. Place bells on your dog's collar, although this will do nothing for the toad, it may help you to recognise when they are on the chase of a toad.



You can train your dog not to attack toads. Each evening, take your dog out on a lead. Wait for the first sign of your dog showing interest in the toad and demand they "LEAVE IT" the toad alone. As you issue this command, turn and lead your dog away from the toad and then reward if they follow you. Return to the toad again and repeat the process as soon as your dog shows interest. Stop the session if your dog is getting too excited.

If you suspect a toad has poisoned your pet, you will have a good chance of saving their life with prompt action. Transport your pet to your veterinarian as quickly and quietly as possible. Keep your pet cool (as they overheat when convulsing) and gently restrained. If your pet is convulsing, they can do harm to themselves by knocking against objects as they may not recognise you. They may also become vicious. Handle an affected pet with caution.