

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Poison Prevention for Pets by M. Kathleen Shaw, DVM**

Poison prevention week for pets is March 17th through the 23rd. This annual observance started in 1961 to highlight the dangers of accidental poisonings in children, and is a great time to discuss potential dangers to our pets, as well.

In reviewing over 180,000 calls about pets exposed to potentially poisonous substances in 2012, the ASPCA's Poison Control center reports that for the fifth straight year, prescription human medications were the top problem. 25,000 calls were taken in 2012: that's almost 70 calls per day! The top three medications were heart/blood pressure pills, antidepressants, and pain medications. The next most common poisonous substance was insecticides, with 19,000 calls and over half of those were cats. Our feline friends are very susceptible to ingredients in many over the counter and veterinary products. Always read the label fully and check with your veterinarian before applying any topicals on a cat!

Over the counter human drugs are were third, including drugs such as aspirin and Tylenol and even herbal and nutraceutical products. Coming in fourth are veterinary products such as flavored chew tabs for pets. In many cases, the entire bottle was consumed! Rounding out the top five are household items, including cleaning products.

Dogs are much more likely to get into trouble around the house than cats (9 of the top 10 spots go to dogs), with Labrador Retrievers topping the list. They are followed by mixed breed dogs, Chihuahuas, Golden Retrievers, and Yorkies. Prevention consists of pet proofing your home in the same way you would child proof it: keep all potentially toxic substances up high or locked up.

If you suspect your pet has ingested any of the above items, chocolate, foods with xylitol sweetener (gum), a rodenticide, or any lawn and garden product, call your veterinarian immediately. If you are not sure if the product is toxic, call. It's better to be safe than sorry. The ASPCA's Poison Center also has a 24 hour hotline at 888-426-4435. Since 1978, they have handled over two million cases.

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*The Vermont Veterinary Medical Association (VVMA), founded in 1898, is a professional organization of 340 veterinarians dedicated to compassionate animal care and quality medicine. For more information, visit [www.vtvets.org](http://www.vtvets.org) or call (802) 878-6888.*