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How Can I Make My House Safe For My Pets?

Clell Bagley

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A weekly question/answer column

How Can I Make My House Safe For My Pets?

Clell Bagley answers:*

Just as candy, pills and house plants attract children, they are just as great a temptation for pets. They can also be toxic to them.

- Chocolate is toxic to both cats and dogs, but dogs are much more likely to eat a toxic dose. As little as 2 1/2 ounces of baking chocolate could poison a 20 pound dog. Other forms of chocolate are less toxic, but they still can be potentially dangerous. The toxins, caffeine and the obromine, are rapidly absorbed but slowly excreted by cats and dogs.
- Ornamental plants such as mistletoe, holly and poinsettia are occasionally eaten by dogs and cats. Just one to three berries, especially mistletoe, may result in clinical signs and even death of pets.
- Keep pain medications put away where dogs don't have access to them. They seem to be attracted to ibuprofen, acetaminophen, aspirin and indomethacin. In one summary of poisoning cases, accidental exposures accounted for 75 percent of all the poisoning cases in dogs.
- Keep acetaminophen away from cats, as they lack the enzyme needed to detoxify one of its ingredients. Aspirin is also dangerous for cats since they can easily be overdosed.

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* Clell Bagley is Utah State University Extension Veterinarian