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Keeping Pets Safe in the Yard

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Most every homeowner considers safety for kids and family members when planning and working a landscape, but sometimes we forget about keeping our four-legged family members safe.

Pesticides (insecticides, herbicides, rodenticides and the like) can be toxic to animals. Each product label lists the sites and plants on which it can be safely and legally used. Check the label directions to determine whether the product can be used around pets and when it is safe for pets or grazing animals to enter the treated area. Before applying a pesticide, pick up animal food and water dishes, as well as toys.

Insecticides are especially likely to be problems for pest due to them having similar nervous systems as insects. Systemic insecticides, those that move through the entire plant, can poison animals that chew the treated plant's leaves or fruit, if eaten within a certain time after application (in some cases, months). Bug baits, citronella candles, flea products, pool and pond treatments and rodent traps can all harm pets.

Many plants may be poisonous to pets. Each year the Animal Poison Control Center experts, 888-426-4435, receive thousands of calls involving accidental poisoning of pets. Some poisonous plants include daffodil, amaryllis, crocus, gladiola, iris, hyacinth, lily-of-the-valley, cyclamen, aloe, hydrangea, kalanchoe, lily, morning glory, foxglove, onion, green parts of tomato and potato, heavenly bamboo, holly, rhododendron and ivy. For a more thorough list, see <http://www.aspca.org/pet-care/poison-control/plants/>.

Fertilizers can sicken a pet if eaten. A pet may get into a bag of fertilizer or walk through or roll in a treated area and then lick their feet or fur, ingesting the product. Both pesticides and fertilizer products may persist for days or weeks after application.

Many species of mushrooms may make a pet very sick or even cause death. Mushroom poisoning symptoms include vomiting, diarrhea, severe digestive problems, liver failure and shock.

Other safety issues: Do you put your pet in the house when you are mowing, weed-eating, applying pesticides or pruning trees? Do you put your tools away when done and not leave them lying around while working? Pets can trip, fall or step on sharp tools and rakes.

Think ahead to keep your pets safe. Read pesticide product labels carefully and follow the directions. Use the least toxic methods for managing weeds, insects and other pests. Keep pets out of treated areas for the indicated time period. Store products safely and seal them tightly. Keep mushrooms and other hazards out of your yard.