Strychnine Poisoning in Dogs and Cats

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Toxin
Strychnine

Source
Pesticides used to control gophers, moles, rats, coyotes, and other potential pests.

General Information
Strychnine affects the nervous system by causing uncontrolled firing of the nerves that cause muscle movement. This causes muscle injury, muscle cell breakdown, and hyperthermia. The respiratory muscles are contracted resulting in difficulty breathing, lack of oxygen to the body, and death if not treated. Clinical signs may be present within 10 minutes to 2 hours of ingestion.

Toxic Dose
Dogs: 0.3 mg per pound of body weight.
Cats: 0.9 mg per pound of body weight.

Signs
Nervousness, tenseness, and stiffness. Violent seizures may be caused by touch, sound, or light, or may occur spontaneously. Progression to extensor rigidity produces a "saw horse" posture.

Immediate Action
Induce vomiting if alert and not seizuring. Seek veterinary attention.

Veterinary Care
General treatment: The induction of vomiting may be continued, gastric lavage is performed, and activated charcoal is administered.

Supportive treatment: The animal is anesthetized with pentobarbital or inhalant (gas) anesthesia to control the seizures. IV fluids are administered to maintain hydration. The animal is monitored and treated for hyperthermia. The pet should be kept in a quiet, darkened room to decrease sensory input. Treatment may need to be continued for 48 hours or longer until the strychnine is out of the body's system.

Specific treatment: Unavailable.

Prognosis
Guarded to good.